UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A CASE STUDY OF AN EFFECTIVE THIRD SECTOR ORGANIZATION

BY

CHRISTOPHER JOHN ROCHON

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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April 10, 1997.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of **Mrs. Anne Hemmingway**. Anne served the children of Alberta for many years as a dedicated and faithful servant in her role as public school trustee, community leader, and mentor to many.

Her love of education, compassion, wit, and intelligence made those around her richer for the experience. Her understanding of servant leadership played a significant role in my search for an organization that understood and practiced the values that Anne lived.

ABSTRACT

Although effective organizational practices are critical to third sector organizations, there is little understanding of how such effectiveness is created and maintained within third sector organizations. The extant literature documents models and correlates of third sector effectiveness but does not examine the endemic issues facing third sector organizations nor their responses to those issues. This study examines the issues within a highly effective third sector organization.

The purpose of the study was to examine how an organization has been able to establish and maintain exemplary service within a rapidly changing political, social, and economic climate. The case study used qualitative methodology and ethnographic techniques. Data collection involved internal and external constituent interviews, observations, and document reviews.

The findings identified the importance of ten characteristics or processes for the organization in the delivery of exemplary service. They are: respect, goal congruence, flexible work groups, staffing, sense of purpose, the management of change, sensitivity to people and issues, and the organization's settings, process, empowerment, leadership, and personal care. Additional findings identified important organizational issues that have not been brought to closure by the organization or that have not been identified as issues by it but that were seen as issues by the researcher. They are: historic relationships, the voluntary nature of third sector organizations, the need for external reviews, and the use of contract staffing.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

In the spring of 1993 as part of my doctoral studies I undertook two field placements. The placements are designed to allow students to be involved in field work that enhances administrative experience. A secondary purpose in the selection of the organizations is to allow the student to establish contacts to further a dissertation research interest.

Dr. Duke, the Program Coordinator, arranged two placements that seemed likely to meet both the program objectives and my personal interests. I was very interested in board/superintendent conflict and saw the placements as excellent opportunities to further that study.

Background

The British Columbia School Trustees' Association

I was assigned to the British Columbia School Trustees' Association (BCSTA) for my first placement. Dr. Alan Newberry, Executive Director, arranged the timing of my assignment to permit me to observe a Provincial Council (PC) and the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the BCSTA. He also made arrangements for a few "office

days" before and after those meetings. The approach allowed me to meet staff, trustees, and district administrators while serving the association in a minor capacity as participant observer at the AGM.

To that end I attended all of the PC meetings and the general sessions of the AGM. I observed several committee meetings that were held throughout the AGM.

Following the AGM I sat in on a meeting with the newly elected Board of Directors. Throughout the process Dr. Newberry and the staff provided me with introductions to trustees and guests of the AGM.

While the focus was on establishing contacts for future research I was also responsible for covering a variety of small group sessions and for the preparation of summary comments and letters of appreciation for sessional speakers.

A different approach

During the PC and AGM several interactions involving staff and elected representatives came to my attention. While they were not anticipated in my plan they were remarkable for their differences from other experiences that I had witnessed, and often participated in, over the last twenty years.

The first observation arose from the debate of the annual budget that occurred at the PC immediately prior to the AGM. At the time it went almost unnoticed.

During a difficult budget debate the line items that related to staff costs, one of the largest expenses of the organization, were reviewed in preparation for a

recommendation to the AGM. While clearly this was an area where the required savings could be quickly effected there was little consideration given to that approach. The debate focussed on the value of staff and the inappropriateness of such cuts until all other avenues were thoroughly explored. Obviously, any such cuts would not be sympathetically received by trustees at the AGM and the debate moved on.

While the incident was not in itself particularly remarkable it did serve to establish the tone for the events that I would observe over the next five days. During difficult debates the tone of the assembly remained respectful. Varying points of view were expressed and listened to without rancour or ill will. While the debates were impassioned at times, they never resulted in the demeaning of an individual through personal attacks or antagonisms.

Prior to the opening of the AGM the major British Columbia newspapers published stories about central office administrative salaries and the use of credit cards to purchase lunches and other related services during times of economic restraint. One story focussed on the home jurisdiction of the president of the BCSTA. It was evident from the early media coverage that the story had the potential to substantially damage central office staff and perhaps offer some jurisdictions an opportunity to undermine their administrators.

I waited for what experience suggested would be the almost inevitable response of some trustees, a defensive reaction and an attack on administration and employment contracts. It did not happen. Instead a clear and supportive message went out from the

Association President. Trustees closed ranks in support of their people, their staff.

Early in the media's coverage of the issue I had an opportunity to meet with two rural trustees. Their focus was concern for their superintendent and how he would *feel* about the newspaper reports. They said they had called "home" to touch base with him, to reassure him of the board's support. He had left for Vancouver and the convention so they followed up by calling his hotel to leave a message assuring him of their support and to let him know what they had heard about the local teachers' association and press regarding the incident. Their purpose was to make sure he didn't get hurt by what they saw as an unfair and inappropriate story.

The press were apparently not able to generate any stories that demonstrated divisions between trustees and their staff. The papers soon tired of the story.

<u>An ovation</u>

The opening of the AGM saw the usual introductions and presentation of reports. When the Executive Director took the stage to deliver his report he stopped and asked the audience's indulgence to allow him to call the staff to the stage to be introduced to their employers, the trustees.

One by one staff were called to the stage and introduced by the CEO. At that point, in my previous experiences, the audience responds with polite applause and the staff troop awkwardly back off the stage and return to their tasks. That did not happen.

Trustees rose *voluntarily as a group* to pay their respect to the staff in a

genuine ovation.

I have only experienced a similar response in a large group at one other point in my administrative career. The moment came at an American Association of School Administrators (AASA) meeting in New Orleans where the chair rose to announce the end of the Gulf War and fifteen thousand delegates rose spontaneously, put their hands to their hearts, and sang their national anthem. While the intensity of the emotion was substantially greater in New Orleans the intuitive understanding of an appropriate response by a large group was a similar and memorable one.

Understanding democratic process

As the AGM continued I had the opportunity to sit with Dr. Newberry next to the President and immediate Past President of the Association. Both the President and Past President came from large urban jurisdictions in southern British Columbia.

General resolutions were being debated in the assembly. A motion was brought to the floor that was clearly not in the interests of the large urban boards and one that would alter a previously adopted position of the Association.

My experiences with other trustee association AGMs suggested that if the debate began to lean towards this new position, the most powerful boards would act to ensure that the focus of the debate was altered by several influential speakers or that a ballot vote would be called to allow the weighted influence of the large jurisdictions to hold sway (as is allowed for under the constitution of the BCSTA and similar

organizations).

I waited for the inevitable, although sometimes subtle, signs of activity as the debate took on a tone that suggested the resolution would succeed. I looked for the parade of high profile speakers, the knot of people in scrums as a call for a weighted ballot is arranged by the major players. There were none.

After a few minutes I leaned across to the Executive Director and asked what I was missing. "Where was the arrangement being made?" "How did I miss it?" "Was I reading the debate incorrectly?" "Was the motion going to carry?"

I was not missing it. It was not happening.

A few minutes later the question was called. The motion passed. I was puzzled. I went to the coffee urn. A casual approach to an influential urban trustee whom I had met earlier. Small talk. Then the question.

"What happened? Why did you let that motion go?"

The question was almost puzzling to the trustee. The response was simple. "It is more important that we maintain our respect for one another and our beliefs than that we win a vote on the floor," he explained, "When we leave the AGM, we will still respect one another. We can always revisit that issue when we're ready but if we lose respect for one another then we all lose."

Over the course of the next several days I continued to "bump into" other processes, situations and events that were outside my previous experiences in similar political arenas. By the end of the AGM I had accomplished the purpose of

establishing trustee and administrative contacts but my focus had changed. I found myself trying to address questions such as: "What made the AGM different from the dozens of similar meetings I had attended in the past?" "Why was the process enjoyable?" "Why was I so comfortable with these strangers?" "What was different about the conversations that I had with such a variety of trustees from around British Columbia?" "Why did I find myself applauding their choices at election time?" "What was the difference in the tone of early morning campaign speeches that I heard?" "What difference did the relative absence of superintendents and secretary treasurers have on the convention floor and the small group sessions?"

After the AGM

The AGM wrapped up early on Sunday. Monday was declared a day of rest. The staff were told to take the day in appreciation for the outstanding efforts of the previous week. I had several reports to prepare so went into the office. I was not alone.

I spoke to one staff member who had also come into the office despite having contributed untold hours over the previous week. I asked about what I had observed. The response was simple.

She spoke of her belief in the fundamental integrity of trustees and their reasons for *serving* in public office. That sense of mutual respect would continue to surface over the next days as I worked in the BCSTA office.

On Tuesday morning Dr. Newberry called a staff meeting in his office. I was invited to join the group and present an observer's viewpoint. It was an easy task.

The AGM was the best I had attended. The staff's enthusiasm for their jobs, their respect for trustees, and one another made the experience a memorable one.

Reframing the approach

Upon returning to the University I reflected frequently about the Association and rethought my original intentions to study board/superintendent conflict. It became apparent that I was likely to gain a greater understanding of the nature of a successful organization by observing an organization like the BCSTA.

While the BCSTA has had its share of conflict to deal with, it has through its governance and administration found ways of managing that conflict to create *win/win* situations for itself and others.

It was at this point that I made the decision to change my research topic and develop a proposal based on my early understandings of the BCSTA , as an effective third sector organization.

Third sector organizations

Organizations such as the BCSTA are considered third sector organizations (Nutt and Backoff, 1992) because of their significant differences from private and public sector organizations and the demands those differences place on the strategic

planning processes for the third sector. As Nutt and Backoff (1992) write:

> The differences between the public and private sectors have prompted a number of studies to find a set of factors that make core distinctions between the sectors . . . . Perry and Rainey's review (1988) found that the unique needs of public sector organizations limit the portability of many ideas derived for the private sector, particularly approaches that deal with mission and strategic direction. . . . This classification uses environmental, transactional, and process distinctions and provides subcategories within each category that elaborate and highlight public-private differences. . . . [T]hird sector organizations have been added to identify an organizational type that has an intermediate level of publicness. (pp. 25-26)

Three aspects in particular highlight the particular factors which are associated with third sector organizations, such as uncertain funding, voluntary membership, and frequent governor [trustee] turnover.

The ownership of, and sources of funding for, the BCSTA have been two of many distinguishing features that have played a role in how the Association has structured itself and how it has responded to changing market signals throughout its history. The governance for the Association was provided by the client/users, the trustees. A majority of Association funding was generated by voluntary membership fees paid by member boards.

These distinguishing features created the need for a different approach to organizational management. Because membership in the Association was voluntary, the Association was particularly vulnerable to reduced revenues as a direct result of user dissatisfaction and, therefore, the Association was particularly sensitive to client satisfaction. Because the Association Board of Directors was elected annually from elected member board representatives, and given the high turnover of school trustees,

board stability and enculturation created additional management and organizational challenges for the Association.

Voluntary membership

While some staff and trustees saw voluntary membership as a strength of the Association others suggested that voluntary membership was a weakness or threat to the Association. The difficulties of voluntary membership were compounded by the "free rider" nature of non-member boards who enjoyed many of the benefits of Association work without assuming responsibility for the costs of those benefits.

Turnover issues

Cultural issues within third sector organizations are challenging because of high turnover rates in governors (trustees) when compared to private and public sector organizations. Within the BCSTA, for example, there were new trustee seminars on an annual basis to assist new trustees' with enculturation into the Association. Strategic directions were reviewed after the annual election of the Board of Directors at the AGM, and service and budgetary adjustments were frequently required to accommodate changed revenue projections. The measurement of organizational effectiveness and efficiency is particularly problematic for third sector organizations since few studies have examined the strategic planning practices and needs of this sector.

The dedication of staff to the provision of exemplary service and the recognized stature of the Association by educational leaders combined with the prominence of values in organizational decision making suggested that the Association would provide the researcher with insights into the creation of more effective educational organizations. Between the initial contact with the Association and subsequent data gathering rapid changes in the political climate of BC became evident and their impact on the organization further highlighted the issues associated with maintaining effectiveness in third sector organizations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study, therefore, is to investigate how a third sector organization was able to develop and maintain exemplary service and a highly dedicated work force within a context of scarce resources and political instability.

Significance of the Study

The research is significant because it includes in the study of an effective third sector organization, an examination of those factors from its initial establishment which may be significant in its effectiveness. It demonstrates what is possible when a cohesive staff follow an agreed set of principles and hence provides a model for other organizations. It also explores the importance of personality in leadership and the influence of a charismatic leader. The ways this organization was shaped by a single

individual points out the importance of administrative hiring practices in small organizations. As well, the study documents the issues surrounding leadership succession and the part a successful succession plays in the survival and growth of a third sector organization.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Assumptions

The research was undertaken with the following assumptions:

1. That the BCSTA was an effective organization. I based this on my initial observations and on subsequent information from expert informants including my field placement mentor, Dr. Bill Duke, other Association Executive Directors and knowledgable educational researchers.
2. That while this third sector organization is unique, other organizations can gain insights from a description of its processes.
3. That there is no single story which includes all participants' understandings of the BCSTA.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to:

1. An examination of one case, the BCSTA.

2. Those with direct current knowledge of the Association.

3. Matters related to organizational effectiveness and exemplary service.

4. Data collected between April 1993 and May 1994.

Limitations

The study is limited by:

1. The participants' willingness/ability to devote time to interviews in light of pressing organizational responsibilities and personal commitments.

2. The amount of time available for data collection.

3. My previous experience as a former superintendent of schools and participant in many AGMs may have limited my ability to see and interpret information.

4. The financial limits of the researcher to privately support the research.

5. A lack of access to sensitive political meetings with external constituents.

6. The inappropriateness of reporting on information shared in confidence by some organiational constituents.

7. The methodological requirement that the document be approved by the focus organization.

Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. This first chapter has provided my reasons for undertaking the study. A brief description of the purpose and significance of the study, and its assumptions, delimitations and limitations are included.

The second chapter opens with a review of the literature of organizational effectiveness and suggests three models for consideration in the study. The next part of the chapter presents definitions of organizational culture from differing paradigms. The final section examines the use of metaphors in the understanding of organizational culture.

The third chapter introduces the research design. It examines the implications of the choice of a research paradigm and reviews the role of the researcher. Ethnographic techniques are discussed. The literature on case study designs is reviewed and consideration is given to the application of case studies in qualitative research. The design of the research is presented. Site selection, access, and participant selection are reviewed. The data collection processes and analysis procedures are explained. The chapter concludes with a review of the aspects of rigour that are seen to be appropriate for the approach selected.

Chapter four reviews the early history of the Association and makes note of the issues that have continued to be matters of attention for the contemporary Association. It looks at the two distinct venues of the Association: those at headquarters and those used by Field and Meeting Services.

Chapter five presents the beginning of the contemporary Association and the appointment of Dr. Henry Armstrong as Executive Director. It looks at how Dr. Armstrong shaped the culture of the Association over his 17 years as CEO.

The sixth chapter presents the beginning of a second major restructuring for the

contemporary Association. It introduces Donna Jones, parent, trustee, and past president of the Association. The chapter presents some of the values and beliefs that Jones brought to the Association. The chapter closes with a report from the firm of Tanton/Mitchell and the identification of the next Executive Director.

Chapter seven reviews the tactical and strategic decisions by Dr. Newberry, the Executive Director during the fieldwork period. It outlines the Association's strategic planning processes during the 1993/94 research and brings closure to the transitional period that began with the review process by the governance arm of the Association, the Board of Directors.

Chapter eight introduces the contemporary Association with a review of its most culturally significant characteristics. It presents relationship and organizational values issues and outlines the areas of professionalism, staffing, empowerment, and process. The chapter closes with a short epilogue that identifies some changes since the conclusion of the fieldwork.

The ninth chapter introduces the discussion of the findings. The chapter is rooted in the field work (Chapters 4-8), the literature review, the writer's reflections, and understandings from active participation in Association activities. Additional writers are introduced to extend and clarify the findings. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the possible implications of the fieldwork for professional practice.

CHAPTER 2

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review contains three major sections: models of organizational effectiveness, factors associated with third sector organizations, and a review of organizations as cultures. It begins with an examination of the traditional areas of effectiveness and efficiency. Using the major models found in the literature the review provides an overview of the main approaches used to explain organizational success. The second section examines the factors identified in effective third sector organizations (Nutt and Backoff, 1992). The third part of the review focusses on an understanding of organizations as cultures. It is based mainly on the work of Alvesson (1993) who cites Frost et al. (1985, p. 17):

> Talking about organizational culture seems to mean talking about the importance for people of symbolism - of rituals, myths, stories and legends -- and about the interpretation of events, ideas, and experiences that are influenced and shaped by the groups within which they live. (p. 2)

The Literature on Effectiveness

Organizational effectiveness and efficiency have been significant concerns for both researchers and practitioners throughout the history of organizational study. Hodgkinson's (1985) contention that effectiveness and efficiency are so fundamental to our understandings of organizations that they have become the metavalues of

organization may be open to debate[1] but there can be little question of the importance of effectiveness in any assessment of an organization by the researcher or practitioner. Theoretical models and empirical studies have attempted to define the essential elements of organizational effectiveness for most of the century.

> The importance of assessing the performance of formal organizations was widely recognized early in the twentieth century. Thus, Weber (1947), Barnard (1938), and members of what have become known as the "classical" school of organizational theorists, (Fayol, 1949; Gulick, 1937; Urwick, 1943; Taylor, 1911) all placed heavy emphasis on the determinates of organizational effectiveness or "efficiency" (Spray, 1976, p. 1).

However, the work in organizational effectiveness has not been cumulative (Gessesse, 1988). There has been limited progress since Seashore and Yuchtman's (1967) factor analysis explorations and Steer's (1975) multi-variate analysis. Tsui (1990) and others have taken the approach outlined by Goodman, Atkin and Schoorman (1983) when they suggest a moratorium on effectiveness theory studies. They recommend that research focus on clearly defined components of effectiveness rather than on the wide ranging approaches that have met with limited success.

Scholars (Cameron and Whetton, 1983; Goodman and Pennings, 1977; Quinn and Cameron, 1988; Tsui, 1990; Van de Ven and Ferry, 1980) suggest that a single

---

[1] The debate regarding effectiveness and efficiency has been an ongoing one. The early arguments suggested that effectiveness and efficiency were synonymous. Later arguments tended to view effectiveness as an external attribute and efficiency as an internal consideration. Nutt and Backoff (1992) identify the importance of effectiveness in several third sector organizational factors however efficiency appears to have a less prominent place in the third sector. For a further discussion of this issue see the section "Factors Associated with Third Sector Effectiveness".

theory or approach will not produce a satisfactory understanding of the nature of organizational effectiveness. Cameron and Whetton's (1983) observation that organizational effectiveness is a construct rather than a concept suggests reasons for the need for a multi-faceted approach to the issue.

While a synthesis of existing approaches remains to be developed, a review of the major models will serve to identify the theories and practices seen in the literature as potentially valuable in assessing organizational effectiveness.

The Major Models

A review of the literature reveals six major models: goal models (Barnard, 1938; Bluedorn, 1980; Cameron, 1980; Campbell, 1974; Etizioni, 1961; Georgopoulos and Tannenbaum, 1957; Mott, 1972; Ratsoy, 1983 Seashore, 1967; Yutchman and Zummuto, 1982), system resource models (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Lawler, 1980; Nadler and Tushman, 1980; Scott, 1981 Yutchman and Seashore, 1967), strategic constituencies models (Bolman and Deal, 1984; Cameron, 1980; Etzioni, 1961; Gilmore, 1988; Katz and Kahn, 1978; Perrow, 1972; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Quinn, 1988), internal processes or maintenance models (Bennis, 1966; Nadler and Tushman, 1980), legitimacy models (Miles and Cameron, 1982; Zammuto, 1982) and ecology models (Aldrich, 1979).

Since the ecology model is a logical extension of the system resource model they are combined in this study. The internal process model is included in the

constituency model. The legitimacy model is concerned with public acceptance; these characteristics are given consideration within the ecology model.

The major models, for the purposes of this study, are combined under three headings:

a. goal models

b. strategic constituencies models

c. ecology models.

Goal models

Goal models differentiate between the formal, prescribed, or stated goals, and the informal, actual, or derived goals of the organization.

The formal goals are often stated in the enabling legislation or charter of the organization. They may be reflected in the strategic plan or other formal documents. These goals can be useful in assessing organization effectiveness in relation to the organizational mandate. They may serve as an indication of variances between the public beliefs (formal, prescribed, or espoused) about the organization and its private (informal or actual) goals.

The informal goals may be more covert and less 'durable'. Informal goals may exist within constituencies and not be shared throughout the organization. If informal goals are not widely shared, or if conflict exists with formal goals of the organization, they may be an indicator of a less effective organization.

Strategic constituencies models

These models are built on the belief that it is possible to identify the most powerful stakeholders in an organization in much the same way as sociologists identify dominant groups and individuals in other environments. These stakeholders are identified through their constituent groups. The most powerful constituents are labelled the "dominant coalition" or "strategic constituencies".

Some research identifies a key constituency while some suggests that more than one constituency will form a coalition, (Bolman and Deal, 1984; Gilmore, 1988) which may exert a major influence and, thereby, determine the effectiveness of the organization. This area is of particular interest in investigating a third sector organization.

Third sector organizations may be less stable than their private and public sector counterparts. This instability may indicate that the powers of constituencies change with greater rapidity in third sector organizations than in other sectors. The potential for coalitions to become powerful on certain issues is a consideration in understanding organizational changes.

Organizational charters that speak to length of elected service create pressures on some constituencies and give advantages to the more permanent constituencies (generally employee constituencies) in third sector organizations.

The influence of less powerful constituencies will be important to consider in this research. Students, parents, and other external constituencies, are essential for

educational associations and yet they may be less influential, especially in the short term, than more visible constituencies.

The ability and willingness of key groups to work together in harmony is viewed as critical in the establishment and maintenance of an effective third sector organization. This is a focus of this research study.

Ecology models

This model arises out of the earlier systems resource models (Yutchman and Seashore, 1967). Aldrich (1979) was the first proponent of this variation of the systems resource model. He proposes that the ultimate test of effectiveness is the organization's survival. Survival is found in the organization's ability to acquire scarce resources by competing with other organizations in the environment.

Unlike early writers, such as Taylor (1915/1967) and Barnard (1938), Aldrich (1979) distinguishes between efficiency and effectiveness:

> The concept of efficiency has mainly an internal relevance (to maximize internal control and communication), whereas the concept of effectiveness refers to an organization's ability to exploit its environment in the acquisition of scarce resources (p. 22).

The implications are significant for third sector organizations in times of restraint. School boards are not mandated to join, nor maintain membership in, their Trustees' Association. Given the difficult economic times during the last decade, an organization's economic health and ability to survive is significant in understanding its

effectiveness.

Factors Associated with Third Sector Effectiveness

The factors which affect third sector effectiveness are more easily understood when the factors which distinguish third sector, private, and public organizations are reviewed.

In "Organizational theory and organizational effectiveness: An exploratory analysis" Evans (1976) develops a table that details indices of effectiveness in several types of private and public sector organizations. The common index identified in all public sector organizations is throughput (units) per dollar of annual budget. The similarity between that criterion and the criterion used in the evaluation of business organizations (return on investment) suggests a concern that is more fundamental to private and public sector organizations than third sector organizations. Evans' (1976) observations fit with earlier work (Fredrick Taylor (1915/1967) and others) in suggesting that efficiency and effectiveness are two sides of the same coin while other writers have suggested that the differences are a matter of internal or external application. I suggest that research in the third sector reveals a more substantial distinction between effectiveness and efficiency and that third sector organizations are more appropriately "measured" in this area. This view appears to be supported by a review of the literature that reveals significant differences in the measurement of organizational effectiveness in the private, public, and third sectors (Mohr, 1983).

In the private sector profitability is the overarching consideration in assessment

(Mott, 1972; Spray, 1976), although other considerations are also important (Kilmann, 1984). However, without profitability private enterprises cannot continue. The same constraints do not, however, apply with equal rigour in the public and third sectors. Therefore, it is more appropriate to look outside the private sector for indicators of effectiveness in the third sector.

Correlates of Third Sector Effectiveness

The following correlates of third sector organizational effectiveness have been adapted from the differences identified by (Nutt and Backoff, 1992) in their examination:

1. sensitive to the oversight bodies and the service choices of clients
2. responsive to market signals
3. able to cope with mixed and unclear market signals
4. able to operate within limited autonomy and flexibility imposed by organizational membership
5. able to develop and maintain political influence
6. able to develop a stable source of financing
7. able to identify mandate limits without legislative intervention
8. able to conduct internal reviews to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and, threats to the organization
9. able to respond to multiple goals that may be difficult to priorize

or be disputed by organizational members

10. able to operate in an environment having concerns about both equity and efficiency

11. able to find a consensus within membership to allow for achievement of policy decisions

12. able to operate with an "agency management within an authority structure"

13. able to accept "limitations posed by traditional roles"

14. able to tolerate a high degree of ambiguity until "consensual view emerges"

15. behaviourial norms are created and maintained by professional expectations (Nutt and Backoff, 1992, p. 27-30).

While some of these factors also occur in the other sectors the focus is significantly different. The need for sensitivity to those factors is reflected in several areas. There is a greater sensitivity in third sector organizations to effectiveness than is apparent in other sectors. Some, or all of the correlates, may be exhibited in an effective third sector organization. They, much like the models introduced earlier, are intended to be neither exclusionary nor inclusive but rather to serve as a grounding to help ensure research sensitivity to factors which may be significant in understanding third sector organizational effectiveness.

Other Considerations

While I recognize the value of the above literature in the development of an

understanding of organizational effectiveness the reviews speak to only part of the question. The above characteristics arise largely from the literature and thinking of positivist management. They are substantially concerned with the "facts", the tangibles of effectiveness. Such an approach takes us only part way in our understanding.

The literature speaks of the characteristics which address the needs to "satisfice", to meet the goal of effectiveness. The literature does not speak to the ability to move beyond that point towards exemplary behaviour. It substantially omits the viewpoint expressed by the Aristotelian understanding of praxis: ". . . a duality in action, two 'moments' of consciousness or reflection on the one hand and behaviour and commitment on the other" (Hodgkinson, 1983, p. 55).

Understanding the creation of exemplary organizations should be a substantial goal in the study of organizational effectiveness. These steps take the inquiry from facts to values; from positivism to naturalism. While the indicators of effectiveness are amenable to checklists and rational instruments the understanding of organizational values are more appropriately seen through the study of organizational culture.

The result is that while the rational attributes of effectiveness, as outlined in the literature, have been identified I believe that to understand the ability of an organization to move past effectiveness to exemplary performance we must understand its values (Hodgkinson, 1983) and that those can most appropriately be surfaced

from the formal and informal texts of the words, actions, and behaviours[2] of its constituents. As Alvesson (1993) observes:

> Deal and Kennedy (1982) refer to the motivational benefits of small units and the development of information technology which has facilitated decentralization and made control possible without various intermediate levels between top management and operative units. Culture then becomes significant as a glue holding the organization together, a soft complement to hard data (p. 4).

Organizational Culture

Definitions of organizational culture are diverse and plentiful. The features of organizational culture that are emphasized appear to be dependant upon the writer's organizational paradigm.

The consultant and psychologist Edgar Schein (1985), writes:

> Organizational cultures are created by leaders, and one of the most decisive functions of leadership may well be the creation, the management, and - if and when that may become necessary -- the destruction of culture. Culture and leadership, when one examines them closely, are two sides of the same coin, and neither can really be understood by itself. (p. 2)

The social scientist, Morgan (1986), offers a critical reflection on the views of management theorists and consultants when he observes that the tendency of management theorists is to:

> view culture as a distinct entity with clearly defined attributes. Like organizational structure, culture is often viewed as a set of distinct variables,

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2 Hodgkinson (1983) differentiates between actions and behaviours in his discussion of Aristotle's term praxis. "Behaviour is discernible movement while action is movement with identified intent (p.55)."

> such as beliefs, stories, norms, and rituals, that somehow form a cultural whole. Such a view is unduly mechanistic, giving rise to the idea that culture can be manipulated in an instrumental way. It is this kind of mechanistic attitude that underlies many perspectives advocating the management of culture. However, from the inside, culture seems more holographic than mechanistic. Where corporate culture is strong and robust a distinctive ethos pervades the whole organization: employees exude the characteristics that define the mission or ethos of the whole. . . . (p.139)

Like Morgan the management school author, Martin (1992) sees culture as organizational process, but points out that while holistic, each person has an individual understanding of the organization. She writes:

> *As individuals come into contact with organizations, they come into contact with dress norms, stories people tell about what goes on, the organization's formal rules and procedures, its informal codes of behavior, rituals, tasks, pay systems, jargon, and jokes only understood by insiders, and so on. These elements are some of the manifestations of organizational culture. When cultural members interpret the meanings of these manifestations, their perceptions, memories, beliefs, experiences, and values will vary, so interpretations will differ - even of the same phenomenon. The patterns or configurations of these interpretations, and the ways they are enacted, constitute culture. (p. 1)* [italics in original]

In the study of organizations while it has been generally recognized that organizational culture is important, writers are divided about whether it is an aspect of organization or whether it is the organizing process itself. However, both camps accepts its importance in relation to an organization's structure, decision making processes, and success. Culture is a construct most closely associated with anthropology.

For anthropologists, the respected ethnographer, Spradley (1979), explains:

> Culture . . . refers to the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret

> experience and generate *social behavior*. . . . "By restricting the definition of culture to shared knowledge, we do not eliminate an interest in behavior, customs, objects, or emotion. We have merely shifted the emphasis from these phenomena to their *meaning*. The ethnographer observes behavior, but goes beyond it to inquire about the meaning of that behavior. The ethnographer sees artifacts and natural objects but goes beyond them to discover what meanings people assign to these objects. The ethnographer observes and records emotional states, but goes beyond them to discover the meaning of fear, anxiety, anger, and other feelings. . . . Culture, as a shared system of meanings, is learned, revised, maintained, and defined in the context of people interacting. . . . Culture, the knowledge that people have learned as members of a group, cannot be observed directly. (p.5-7)

Alvesson's (1993) agreement with Frost's definition of culture, cited in the opening of the chapter, is "in line with the view broadly shared by many modern anthropologists (e.g. D'Andrade, 1984; Geertz, 1973)" (p. 2). Alvesson adds: "I will also, however, take organizational culture to include values and assumptions about social reality" (p. 2). I have adopted this orientation for this research.

Metaphors and Culture

A very popular approach to the understanding of organizational culture has been through the use of metaphor (Alvesson, 1993; Bolman and Deal, 1991; Gagliardi, 1992; McKenna & Wright, 1994; Morgan, 1986). Alvesson (1993) notes: "Metaphors are seen as important organizing devices in thinking and talking about complex phenomena" (p. 9). He cautions readers:

> Despite the benefits that the use of metaphors appears to offer the study of organizations (see, e.g., Berg, 1982; Mangham & Overington, 1987; Morgan, 1980, 1986), it also presents some problems. One of these is the risk of using 'bad ones'. An appealing metaphor may stand in the way of a less elegant but

> more accurate and elaborate description. For example, the garbage-can metaphor for organizational decision-making (March & Olson, 1976) may have more rhetorical appeal than theoretical value (Pinder & Bourgeois, 1982). The degree of overlap between the type of decision-making process addressed and the garbage can is too small. . . . (p. 12)

Alvesson (1993) identifies "ten metaphors for culture drawn from the contemporary literature" (p. 18) and discusses the impact of each. However, in general these metaphors either stress the visionary aspect (culture as compass, which also includes culture as blinders), the shared meaning (culture as social glue or the opposite culture as non-order and affect regulator) or the aspect of control either by managers (culture as management rites), or workers (culture as exchange regulator).

While metaphors have their drawbacks, Alvesson (1993) concludes that good metaphors, citing Baker (1980), describe the characteristics of a "good" culture. He writes:

> Good cultures are characterized by norms and values supportive of excellence, teamwork, profitability, honesty, a customer service orientation, pride in one's work, and commitment to the organization. Most of all they are supportive of adaptability - the capacity to thrive over the long run despite new competition, new regulations, new technological developments, and the strains of growth. (p. 28)

Alvesson's view of culture stresses the values of organizational members rather than specific actions or artifacts.

Morgan's (1986) view is somewhat different. He writes:

> Managers can influence the evolution of culture by being aware of the symbolic consequences of their actions and by attempting to foster desired values, but they can never control culture in the sense that many management

> writers advocate. The holographic diffusion of culture means that it pervades activity in a way that is not amenable to direct control by any single group of individuals. (p. 139)

Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, and Martin (1985) in "An Allegorical View of Organizational Culture"(p. 13-25) present an entertaining and concise overview of the perspectives, questions, and interests of organizational culture that have engaged the academic community over the years. In a dozen pages the allegory not only provides a broad understanding of topic but also highlights the diverse understandings of culture and organization.

These discussions range from the "fundamental question of why organizational culture" (p.14) has attracted so much attention, to definitions of culture, "an organization's culture has to do with shared assumptions, priorities, meanings, and values - with patterns of beliefs among people in organizations" (p. 17). Some tell stories of organizational cultures as "patterns and cycles of change and the fall and rise of organizations", while other present culture as a means of providing a "context to talk about socializing all those people who join and move about in organizations" (p. 18). They continue with a discussion of the differences in the understandings of the attributes of culture, "some see the term 'organizational culture' as a metaphor - organizations are like cultures - and they try to understand the attributes of culture that might be relevant to organizations in terms of a symbolic process" while others see "organizational culture as a thing, an objective entity, that can be examined in terms of variables (independent and dependent) and linked to other things such as performance,

satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness" (p. 18).

One author observes: "I heard the phrase 'organizations as culture-bearing milieus' . . . this meant that organizations may be settings through which shared understandings may emerge" (p. 19), and they include an examination of the question of culture as a means of "understanding life at work, and for making it more humane, more meaningful" (p. 21). In the end their allegory serves both to highlight the diversity of understandings of culture and the view that while shared understandings are fundamental to culture they arise through discussion and not by fiat.

Summary

The literature review examined three areas: organizational effectiveness, third sector organizations, and organizations as cultures. Models of effectiveness were reviewed and three were presented for consideration in the study. The correlates of third sector effectiveness were outlined. While such information outlines writings about organizational effectiveness, it does little to help explain why some third sector organizations are able to achieve high levels of effectiveness.

In the third section definitions of culture were presented and the use of metaphors in developing a broader understanding of culture was explored. It is evident that while the literature on organizational culture is divided in its description of culture, there is general agreement on its importance for achieving organizational success.

This study will seek to explore how one third sector organization was able to develop and maintain exemplary service through an examination of its structure, processes, and culture.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

According to Janesick (1994) the "first set of [research] design decisions have to do with what is studied, under what circumstances, for what duration of time, and with whom" (p. 211). However, fundamentally different approaches to the same research problem are used by qualitative and quantitative researchers. Merriam (1988), citing Firestone (1987), found that in studying the same research problem, "different techniques of presentation to project divergent assumptions about the world and different means to persuade the reader of its conclusions" (p. 3) were used by qualitative and quantitative researchers. Merriam (1988) observed: "All aspects of a research inquiry thus appear to be logically connected to the paradigm of choice" (p. 3). In this research study, a qualitative, naturalistic orientation is the paradigm of choice.

The Research Methodology

Marshall (1993) citing Yin (1984) writes that "if a researcher has little control over events, and the focus of the research is on a contemporary phenomenon within

some real-life context, then, in general, case studies are the preferred research strategy" (p. 65).

Case Study Designs

In emphasizing the importance of the particular setting, Stake (1988) explained that

> . . . the principal difference between case studies and other research studies is that the focus of attention is the case, not the whole population of cases . . . the search is for an understanding of the particular case, in its idiosyncracy, in its complexity. (p. 256)

Stake saw this emphasis as integral to a case study design:

> The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (1995, p. 8)

Stake's view is consistent with the earlier work of Merriam (1988), Patton (1985), and Yin (1984). Patton (1985), cited in Marshall (1993), observes "the objective of qualitative or naturalistic research is 'to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions therein'" (p.1). This understanding, Patton later explains

> is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting -- what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting-- and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. . . . This analysis strives for depth of understanding. (p. 65)

The Use of Case Studies

Merriam (1988) identifies the four characteristics that she views as the "essential properties of a qualitative case study: particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive" (p. 11). She continues by describing each of the attributes:

> *Particularistic* means that case studies focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. . . .
> *Descriptive* means that the end product of a case study is a rich, "thick" description of the phenomenon under study. *Thick description* is a term from anthropology and means the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated. It also means "interpreting the meaning of . . . demographic and descriptive data in terms of cultural norms and mores, community values, deep-seated attitudes and notions, and the like" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p. 119). . . .
> *Heuristic* means that case studies illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study. . . .
> *Inductive* that for the most part, case studies rely on inductive reasoning. Generalizations, concepts, or hypotheses emerge from an examination of data - data grounded in the context itself. (p. 13)[italics in original]

Merriam (1988) offers Olson's (1982) list of case study characteristics to enlarge understanding of the nature of the case study design. With reference to the case study's *particularistic* nature Olson identifies three characteristics.

- It can suggest to the reader what to do or what not to do in a similar situation.
- It can examine a specific instance but illuminate a general problem.
- It may or may not be influenced by the author's bias.

Olson lists several aspects of a case study which address its *descriptive* nature:

- It can illustrate the complexities of a situation - the facts that not one but many factors contributed to it.
- It has the advantage of hindsight yet can be relevant in the present.
- It can show the influence of personalities on the issue.
- It can show the influence of the passage of time on the issue - deadlines, change of legislators, cessation of funding, and so on.
- It can obtain information from a wide variety of sources.
- It can cover many years and describe how the preceding decades led to a situation.
- It can spell out differences of opinion on the issue and suggest how these differences have influenced the result.
- It can present information in a wide variety of ways . . . and from the viewpoints of different groups.

The *heuristic* quality of a case study is suggested by these aspects:

- It can explain the reasons for a problem, the background of a situation, what happened, and why.
- It can explain why an innovation worked or failed to work.
- It can discuss and evaluate alternatives not chosen.
- It can evaluate, summarize, and conclude, thus increasing its potential

applicability (pp. 13-14).

Thus the literature supports the case study approach as the appropriate research design when the researcher is seeking to describe a particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, inductive (Merriam, 1988), idiosyncratic and complex phenomenon such as the BCSTA.

The Design for the Research

Since the purpose of this study was to investigate, in detail, a single organization, and to look in depth at the participants' understandings of the British Columbia School Trustees' Association, its history, and culture, a naturalistic qualitative case study design was used for the research.

The specific focus of the research on the BCSTA means that the focus was particularistic and best suited to a case study research methodology. The opportunity inherent in the case study research method to be descriptive (Olson, 1982) was seen to be essential in offering a rich and thick description of the British Columbia School Trustees' Association (BCSTA). The case research approach allows the research to show the influence of personalities, changing political circumstance, culture, and the effects of historical decisions on the Association.

The Role of the Researcher

Adoption of a qualitative approach does not, in itself, address the question of

the researcher's relationship to the participants. Merriam (1988) identifies roles that may be used by the qualitative researcher:

- complete participant
- participant as observer
- observer as participant
- complete observer (pp. 92-93).

However, in a small organization it is impossible to be a complete observer; the researcher's presence influences others to speak to and to be aware of the researcher's actions. Complete participants have the opposite problem of having daily work compete with the research fieldwork for the available time. I was not a complete participant but I often fulfilled organizational tasks such as stuffing envelopes, copying documents, taking notes on sessions and preparing summaries and letters of thanks to speakers. As such I was able to develop trust with organizational members and hold many informal conversations which aided my understanding of specific events and stories.

I chose to adopt the positions of participant as observer and observer as participant because of the type of questions I could ask and the influence on the relationships between the researcher and the study's participants. I sought an approach that allowed for the use of ethnographic techniques within the framework of a case study (Merriam, 1988; Spradley, 1979).

An Ethnographic Approach

While an ethnography requires that an anthropological approach be consistently applied throughout the research process, it is generally accepted (Spradley, 1979; Wolcott, 1988) that the use of ethnographic techniques is appropriate to assist in research activities.

Unlike survey research, which almost always uses the language of the social scientist (Spradley, 1979) ethnography "depends more fully on the language of the informant. The questions arise out of the informant's culture" (Spradley, 1979, p. 31).

> Ethnographers adopt a particular stance toward people with whom they work. By word and by action, in subtle ways and direct statements, they say, "I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand?" (p. 34)

Thomas (1993, p. 10) defines the scope and focus of ethnography:

> Ethnographers commonly draw their data from direct observations in fieldwork, leading to the generally accepted view that ethnography is "a research process in which the anthropologist closely observes, records, and engages in the daily life of another culture - an experience labelled as the fieldwork method - and then writes accounts of this culture, emphasizing descriptive detail" (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 18).
>
> This definition, however, is somewhat limited by disciplinary imperialism and casts the meaning in the method rather than in the purposes of research as qualitative cultural description. Although most ethnographers gather data through systematic or participant observation, other techniques are also used to retrieve objective meanings from subjective cultural experience.
>
> > Every single human expression represents something which is common to the many and therefore part of [the] objective mind. Every word or sentence, every gesture or form of politeness, every work of art and every historical deed are only understandable because the person

> expressing himself [sic] and the person who understands him are connected by something they have in common; the individual always experiences, thinks, acts, and also understands, in this common sphere. (Dilthey, 1927, p. 146)

In Thomas' view the delineation of artifacts is an integral part of the ethnographer's work.

Gagliardi (1992) views artifacts as including:

> all the visible expressions of a culture, including therewith (as well as objects and the physical arrangements) patterns of behaviour (such as rituals) on the one hand, and, on the other, abstract productions or mental representations (such as stories), which - while having an existence independent of their creators - call on the powers of comprehension of the destinees, rather than on their capacity to experience formal qualities concretely through the senses. (p. 3)

While early work by Maslow (1943) began an exploration of the importance of physical setting its foci were on primary and higher needs rather than an examination of the relationships between setting and organizational success. Herzberg et al. (1959) said that setting was a "hygiene factor" and could not lead to satisfaction but was simply necessary to avoid discontent or indifference. While the Hawthorne experiments (Homans, 1950 summary cited in Hackman, 1992) and the Tavistock study (Trist & Bamforth, 1951 cited in Hackman, 1992) received considerable attention the focus was not on the implications of the settings but rather on group norms. The result has been a tendency to "underrate the influence of the setting and to judge other problems worthier of attention" (Steel 1973, Sundstrom 1987 cited in Gagliardi 1992, p. 6).

Gagliardi (1992) supports the belief that it is time to reexamine our understandings of the importance of organizational setting both to appreciate its capacity to give contextual meaning to other artifacts and behaviours within the organization," (p. 4) and to understand the power of artifacts to "steer and canalize - - their being pathways of action" (p. 4). That understanding was thought to be important in seeking to understand the BCSTA.

Site Selection, Access, and Participant Selection

Site Selection

Site selection was the result of the earlier field work with the Association. That field work offered preliminary indications that many of the characteristics of an effective third sector organization (Nutt and Backoff, 1992) might be identified at the site. The size of the Association's staff was seen to be important. Participants could, potentially, be drawn from both genders, with varying ages, lengths of service, and educational backgrounds, and from a full range of organizational responsibilities. Trustee participants were available in all regions of the Province and could be interviewed during AGMs in a central location. The costs of travel and accommodation were not prohibitive and, therefore, would allow extended periods of field work in Vancouver and Victoria as required. The data were collected over a 14 month period with two intensive three week periods and one shorter period of fieldwork.

Access

Access to the site for an in depth study of the internal constituents and the organizational structure was arranged through a request to the Executive Director.

Dr. Newberry indicated a willingness to cooperate in the study even though the Association was in the midst of a number of very difficult and potentially divisive issues. His agreement was subject to two conditions. First he agreed to take the request to the Board for their discussion and consideration and then, if the Board agreed with the request, the request would be taken to the staff for their consideration. Both groups subsequently met and discussed the request and Dr. Newberry called to confirm my access to the organization.

The access agreement was also discussed at a whole staff meeting at the beginning of the formal research. At that time Dr. Newberry indicated that I was to be given free access to any documents I wished and that he was quite prepared to "let the cards fall where they may" and would impose no restrictions on what was collected or written. He felt confidence in the Association, the trustees, and the staff:

> So we see this as a study, I think people understand the pertinence of the study, they expect it to be an open study and what happens, happens.

Individual staff members were told that it was a matter of personal preference whether or not they wished to participate in the study. It was agreed that the Association would be identified in the study and that individual staff members would be named where appropriate. Subsequently it was decided to remove the names of all

employees other than those of the former and then current Executive Director. One trustee agreed to be named in the study. The naming of other trustees and outside informants was not requested.

Participant Selection

Given the small size of the staff (27) I determined to interview all staff on a voluntary basis. All but three staff members accepted the invitation to be interviewed. Staff members' decisions to participate or exclude themselves were kept confidential although some staff chose to be interviewed in locations that would allow their participation to be recognized by other staff. Informal interviews were conducted with a wide range of trustees during two AGMs and to a lesser extent during the PC. Taped formal interviews were arranged with selected members of the Association's Boards. Members of the academic community and government were interviewed primarily for triangulation purposes.

All formal staff interviews took place in Association headquarters. Early interviews took place in the Executive Director's office and most later interviews were conducted in a small conference room with a few exceptions. Some directors preferred to be interviewed in their work areas and such requests were honoured at all times.

Follow up interviews were conducted primarily in directors' offices or in the small conference area. The exception was in follow-up interviews with the Executive Director and Associate Executive Director. Those interviews occurred in their

respective offices.

Data Collection

Information was gathered through interviews (unstructured and semi-structured), observations (at AGMs, PCs, Board of Directors' meetings, staff meetings, Service Area committee meetings, seminars and in the open area office), document reviews, and work tasks (as assigned during the field placement).

Interviews

Audio taped interviews were conducted with staff, trustees, past trustees, university faculty, contractors, and public officials. All formal interviews were recorded on audio tape except for a brief opening discussion with an outside constituent who agreed to the taping part way into the formal interview. PCs, AGMs, Executive Meetings, committee meetings, seminars, informal interviews, discussions, and social interactions were not tape recorded but notes were taken immediately following any informal meeting or discussion that was seen to have the potential to influence my understanding of the Association[3].

All formal interviews were audio taped. Informal interviews were not taped but field notes were made of conversations, meetings, et cetera. Formal interviews varied

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3 Audio tapes of AGM speeches et cetera are made available by the Association and may be obtained through the Association.

in length from as little as 40 minutes for one interview to multiple sessions extending to more than eight hours. The average interview with staff, other than senior executives, was approximately two hours. Senior staff spent between four and eight hours in taped interviews. Trustee interviews varied from a few minutes to more than five hours. Additional informal meetings over lunch, dinner, coffee and the occasional drink were not audio taped but field notes were completed immediately following those informal exchanges.

The primary focus was on staff and trustee interviews since internal constituents were seen to be central to gaining an understanding of the organization, its people, and practices.

Interviews with academics and others outside the organization were used to compare their understandings of the Association with internal constituents' and then, as needed, seek clarification of stories, values, or understandings.

Interview formats

The format of interviews changed over time in response to participants' responses. In the initial round, interviews were unstructured since no predetermined responses were anticipated. Most interviews opened with the participants being asked to identify their role in the Association and share something of how long they had been with the Association and how they came to join the Association. The purposes of these questions were to establish participant comfort and rapport. As Spradley

(1979) writes: "Ethnographic interviewing involves two distinct but complementary processes: *developing rapport* and *eliciting information*. Rapport encourages informants [participants] to talk about their culture. Eliciting information fosters the development of rapport" (p. 78). [Italics in original]

The etic question

The etic (Stake, 1995) question, " What makes the BCSTA an exemplary organization?" was introduced in the later part of the initial interview in most cases. The wording of the etic question was adapted to the participant's language. The etic question varied from: "What makes the BCSTA an exemplary organization?" to "Tell me what makes the Association special." In some cases participant responses made the etic question inappropriate and the interview followed the emic questions raised by the participant. The emic responses were reviewed through the transcripts to identify etic issues as required (Stake, 1995).

The first round of interviews

The first round of interviews served to establish rapport, elicit information and, identify emic questions. The responses were compared to the factors identified in third sector effectiveness (Nutt and Backoff, 1992) to identify areas of participant interest and to allow the researcher to ask about characteristics of effectiveness that were not identified in the initial interviews. The first round also allowed the researcher to alter

his language to more appropriately reflect the language of the participants. The development of common understandings was essential to the research. As Spradley (1979) writes: "Language is more than a means of communication about reality: it is a tool for constructing reality. Different languages create and express different realities. They categorize experience in different ways. They provide alternative patterns for customary ways of thinking and perceiving" (p. 17).

Subsequent and extended interviews

Subsequent and extended interviews were conducted with selected staff participants. No first round participant refused to continue with interviews when asked. Some participants were not asked for further interviews because they appeared uncomfortable with the process or their interview suggested that they were unable to be candid in their responses since they were anxious to "do well" and ensure that the Association was presented in the best possible light. These participants characteristically identified everything as "wonderful" and everyone as pleasant. Other participants had indicated areas of tension or conflict that had involved those participants and so it was felt that it would be best not to create unnecessary tension for those participants.

All formal staff interviews took place at Association headquarters. Informal interviews took place at AGMs, PCs, local restaurants and before and after committee meetings. Trustee interviews took place in a variety of locations: downtown hotels,

dining rooms, lounges, meeting rooms, trustee homes, on the telephone. University faculty interviews took place in offices and small meeting rooms on campus. Government interviews took place in offices.

All formal interviews, with the exception of about 20 minutes from one interview, were tape recorded and transcribed. Informal meetings were recorded in an interview log as soon as practical after the interview. If notes were jotted down during an interview they were incorporated into the interview log immediately following the meeting. The interview log was one of three sections in the log. Interview logs, observation logs, and document notes combine to form a Field Log.

Observations

Observations were made throughout the contact with the Association. During my field placement and the formal research period (April 1993 to May 1994) I had the opportunity to attend two Annual General Meetings (10 days in total), a Provincial Council meeting (two days), Board of Directors' (approximately two hours each), Standing Committee meetings (varying from a few minutes to two hours), and staff meetings (varying from a few minutes to approximately 45 minutes). These times combined with office time at the Association headquarters during both my field placement (daily for a three week period) and research access (10 days) afforded a substantial opportunity to observe the Association staff in their work clothes as they proceeded with the day to day tasks, challenges, and issues of the Association. The

method of note taking during observation periods varied depending upon the circumstances. When I was attending my second AGM I had no assigned duties and so was free to take notes during the proceedings. These notes became part of the observation log which is contained in the Field Log.

Work Tasks

During my field placement I was assigned various tasks that allowed me to establish a short term working relationship with a wide variety of staff members and a limited number of trustees. The opportunity, along with more passive observations, allowed me to compare the stories that constituents told about the Association and its values with the behaviours that occurred on a daily basis within the organization.

Documents

Free access was provided to all Association documents. Access to the Association library and documents allowed for a search of documents relating to the Association's history, the services, the budgets and programs as well as a wide variety of other organizational documents including: press releases, inter-office memos, letters, briefs, position papers, and evaluation documents. Unrestricted access to photocopying facilities made the collection of copies of important documents inexpensive and convenient.

Document collection was divided into four parts. In the initial stages I asked

staff for any position papers, annual reports, member publications, or other documents that would be provided to me as a new trustee. That request produced a wide array of publications, strategic planning documents, seminar handouts, policy handbooks and AGM packages. The second stage involved a review of EduServ publications (EduServ is the publication arm of the Association) and the selection and purchase of publications which seemed likely to be useful in increasing my understanding of the Association and its decision making processes. The third stage involved a review of the Association's library for publications that related to the history of the Association and its people. That review led to London's 1985 review of the Association. The final part of the document collection occurred over an extended period. It involved requests for particular documents, briefing papers, and background information that participants had indicated were important in reaching an understanding of the Association.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process was a continuous one from the time of the first field placement to the presentation of research. During the initial interview phase audio tapes were reviewed in the evening following interviews and preliminary notes were made of issues that participants had identified as important in understanding the Association. These notes served to create a series of emic questions about participant identified issues. These questions were then explored in follow-up interviews, requests for documents or through the review of already obtained documents.

Transcriptions

Upon returning home I transcribed all audio taped interviews. These transcripts were coded to correspond with preassigned audio tape numbers. Each participant was assigned an alpha-numeric code that allowed the researcher to identify the number of interviews conducted with the participant, the participant's role as an internal or an external constituent. Further coding indicated the affiliation of the participant as either staff or trustee, contractor, university facilitator, external constituent or government respondent. All transcripts were coded by page and line number so that they could be easily located within the 452 pages of audio tape transcripts.

Transcript Reviews

The transcribed interviews were then read through completely without note taking to gain an overall impression of what had been shared. A second reading was then completed to identify potential topics for exploration. A list was developed based on the topics identified during that reading. The list was reviewed to see if anything that I felt was substantive in the interview transcripts or the documents and observation notes was missing. A further review of the list was made and topics were grouped into broad categories to see if the topics were distinct or whether future refinements in the list were required. When I was satisfied with the topics and categories identified coloured flags were placed next to appropriate quotations

throughout the transcript. The coloured flags were then reviewed one at a time to identify the sources of each item. Items that had not been identified by more than one source were then set aside. Items that had two or more sources were then computer marked to allow inclusion in a group.

Document and Observation Reviews

At this point a review of the field documents and observation notes was conducted using the same topic list that had been generated earlier by the transcript review. That review was used to add additional references and to re-include those items that were excluded from the list earlier because of a lack of confirmation from a second source.

A review was then conducted of the identified topics on a one by one basis. Computer generated composites of each topic were printed and read. The end result of the process was unsatisfactory. I felt that I had dissected the organization but lost its heart and soul in the process.

I returned to a reading of the complete transcripts and reconsidered my initial identification of topics. The question of leaders, formal and informal, appeared to be central to staff, trustees, and knowledgable outsiders' understanding of the effectiveness of the Association. A new review of the interviews, documents, and observations was undertaken with this focus in mind. That review confirmed the importance of leadership in understanding the Association's effectiveness.

The Need for Contextual Understanding

The review, however, lacked the contextual understanding that I viewed as critical to understanding the Association and its decisions. I found that an understanding of the historical context was essential to understand the contemporary organization. As Yin (1984) observed chronological structures are often useful in case studies.

> Because case studies generally cover events over time . . . [an] approach is to present the case study evidence in chronological order. Here, the sequence of chapters or sections might follow the early, middle, and late phases of a case history. This approach can serve an important purpose in doing explanatory case studies, because causal sequences must occur linearly over time. (p. 133)

The addition of a chronological component allowed for the inclusion of documentary evidence presented by London (1985) in the examination of issues such as compulsory membership and provincial bargaining. It also gave a context to Dr. Armstrong's service with the Association and the decisions to change the governance structure of the Association.

Aspects of Rigour

The question of rigour is embedded in the research methodology chosen. According to Marshall (1993):

> One of the fundamental challenges to face all researchers is the need to ensure that any data that are collected, or any interpretations that are made, during the conduct of an inquiry, are trustworthy. Conventionally, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), inquirers have addressed the issue of trustworthiness, by considering the "truth value," "applicability," "consistency," and "neutrality" of

> any findings using four different criteria: "Internal validity," "external validity," "reliability," and "objectivity." However, as Lincoln and Guba (1985), Carr and Kemmis (1986), Merriam (1988), and Patton (1990) have suggested, because qualitative research rests upon different ontological, axiological, and epistemological assumptions to those of conventional means of inquiry, different criteria must be used to establish the trustworthiness of data and findings which result from qualitative processes of inquiry. (p. 82)

Morse (1994) describes methods to ensure rigour in qualitative work. She observes that the major methods of ensuring rigour are "intricately linked with reliability and validity checks" (p. 230).

Adequacy and Appropriateness

Morse describes the methods as:

> *Criteria of adequacy and appropriateness of data.* In qualitative research, *adequacy* refers to the amount of data collected, rather than to the number of subjects, as in quantitative research. Adequacy is attained when sufficient data have been collected that saturation occurs and variation is both accounted for and understood. *Appropriateness* refers to selection of information according to the theoretical needs of the study and the emerging model. Sampling occurs purposefully, rather than by some form of random selection from a purposefully chosen population, as in quantitative research. In qualitative research, the investigator samples until repetition from multiple sources is obtained. This provides concurring and confirming data, and ensures saturation. The result of the study must be rich, and sampling strategies such as seeking negative cases also contribute to ensuring the adequacy and appropriateness of the data. (Morse, 1986) [italics in original]

To address the need for "Adequacy" and "Appropriateness" interviews were conducted with 22 of 27 staff members. The first round of interviews was substantially unstructured. Staff were asked to identify "issues" that they felt were important for the Association. Follow-up interviews were conducted to explore the emic questions

that staff identified in the first round. During the second round three informants were identified who were willing and able to offer interpretations of "issues". Further interviews were conducted with these informants to ensure the accuracy of the researcher's understandings and to ensure that participants were in agreement with identified issues. Where there was no agreement further interviews, observations, or document searches were conducted to gain an understanding of the differences in interpretation.

The departure of Dr. Armstrong was such an issue. It serves to illustrate the process used to establish an understanding of participants' differences. Informants understood Dr. Armstrong's leaving differently. Although there was no disagreement about the actual departure there was a range of interpretations as to the reasons for the departure and the need for the departure.

As a result of the apparent differences the "issue" was explored more thoroughly with a range of participants. The participants selected represented a broad cross section of staff (both genders, management and support levels, long term and new staff, et cetera). The "issue" was then explored with trustee participants with various lengths of service and varying levels of organizational involvement. It was also explored with knowledgeable outsiders to gain their perspective on the issue. While no consensus was reached on the reasons behind the departure of the Executive Director there was general agreement on "what happened" although not on "how" it happened. A check of Association documents, interviews with trustee committee

members, and the staff member who was identified by other staff as being most close to the subject were used to "explain the differences" in understanding to the researcher's satisfaction. That "satisfaction" was gained when all of the explanations could be accounted for in the researcher's mind; that is they were consistent with the participant's role in the Association and her/his relationship as she/he described it with the Executive Director.

The Audit Trail

Morse (1994) defines the characteristics of an audit trail that are necessary to ensure an appropriate rigour in qualitative research. She writes:

> Careful documentation of the conceptual development of the project should leave an adequate amount of evidence that interested parties can reconstruct the process by which the investigators reached their conclusion. The audit trail consists of six types of documentation: raw data, data reduction and analysis products, process notes, materials relating to intentions and dispositions, and instrument development information (this [sic] list was developed by Halpern, 1983, and reported in Lincoln & Guba, 1985 pp. 319-320). (p. 230)

The audit trail that was constructed throughout the field work and during subsequent analysis consists of numerous documents. There is a complete numbered record of all audio-taped interviews. There is a set of all documents obtained from the Association and other participants during the field work. These documents are coded in several ways since the coding changed during the analysis of the field notes. There are copies of the researcher's observations from the field studies and copies of early impressions made during and after the initial field placement prior to the beginning of the formal

field work. There is a copy of the release form and correspondence seeking access to the Association for the field work. There are field notes that were collected on the basis of issues and themes. There are field notes which brought together interview material, documents, and field observations under the headings of formal and informal leadership. There are notes which focus on the Executive Directors and notes which focus on an Association President. Finally there are notes that combined other field notes around the areas of organizational culture and organizational values.

Verification

"Verification of the study with secondary informants" is the third step according to Morse (1994). This step presents some difficulty since there are no apparent secondary informants who appear to be in a position to confirm the appropriateness of the interpretation presented. Confirmation of the accuracy of the report was obtained by returning to the primary informants and seeking feedback on the fairness and accuracy of the report.

Ethical Issues

In keeping with the requirements outlined in the document *University Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants* (1991), the following procedures were adopted for the study:

- Written permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Board of Directors

of the British Columbia School Trustees' Association. The letter authorizing the research was written by the Executive Director after a Board decision to approve the research.

- The purpose of the study was outlined to the Association in written correspondence prior to beginning the formal field study. A staff meeting was called to explain the purpose of the research and to inform all staff of their right to not participate in the study. Prior to each interview with a trustee or outside informant the purpose of the research was explained and questions answered. If an audio-tape was to be made prior agreement was gained from each informant.
- All information collected during the research, whether through documents, observations, informal interviews, formal interviews, or while attending meetings of the Association was treated as confidential and have been stored in a secure location.
- All transcripts have been assigned alpha-numeric codes to ensure confidentiality. The names of outside informants have been kept confidential and are not used in the report.
- Participants were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time.
- All transcribing of audio-taped interviews was completed by the researcher or by an agent of the researcher who was informed of the confidential nature of the material and agreed to treat all information on the tapes in strictest confidence.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the research design. It reviewed the questions of site selection, access, and participant selection. The interview, observation and document collection processes were reviewed. The analysis processes used in interview transcript reviews, document reviews, and observation notes were presented.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXT: BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOOL TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION

Introduction

This chapter delineates the history of the Association from its founding in 1905 until 1973 and identifies the major issues which the Association has had to address throughout its existence. It is based on London's (1985) work, research interviews and Association documents. The second part of the chapter describes the physical context of the Association and recognizes the importance of setting as an aspect of organizational culture (Gagliardi, 1992; Greenleaf, 1991; Schein, 1985).

The History of the Association Prior to 1972

The first meeting of what was to become the BCSTA was held in February of 1905. The meeting was hosted by the Vancouver School Board. Nineteen trustees attended the meeting called to discuss proposed changes to the Provincial School Act. Representatives of Kamloops and the Kootenays were the only delegates from the interior of British Columbia at the initial meeting. The remaining trustees were from the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island. During the meeting it was decided to form a provincial association to be named the British Columbia Association of School Trustees (London, 1985).

The agenda of the first meeting has a striking similarity to a modern day agenda. Trustees discussed hours of school operation, expropriation of land, length of the school year, board control of local taxation, curriculum, and a reaffirmation of the belief that school boards should be retained in their present form rather than being replaced by provincial appointees.

Funding and Local Taxation

A Vancouver newspaper, The Daily Province, reported on the meeting and particularly on the trustees' discussion of the need to control some portion of the local taxation. The Province opposed the position:

> The public will be at a loss to understand the desire displayed by certain members of our local board to secure for the trustees the handling of money. It seems to us that it is much better that the school board direct its attention rather to securing value for expenditures than the control of funds. (The Daily Province, February 17, 1905 p. 6 cited in London, 1985, p. 58)

These early governance questions would continue to resurface for the next 85 years and trustees and staff continued to wrestle with the Socratic questions about governance, responsibility, and the nature of democracy.

An editorial of the day mused about the need for local control, offering the opinion that "the requirements of one locality are not those of another and . . . the interests of the province at large are safer in the hands of a central administration" (London, 1985, p. 58).

These questions, too, continue into the last decade of the century as politicians

at the federal, provincial, and local levels continue to search for the balance between equal funding and equity of educational opportunity.

Representation

By 1911 the Association had become a much more representative body through broader rural representation. It is estimated that about 200 trustee delegates attended the annual convention in that year.

The early signs of the establishment of aspects of the organizational culture are evident with the introduction of AGM traditions that remain today: student performances, addresses by provincial government representatives, and greetings from fraternal organizations.

The economies of scale that were to be enjoyed with centralized schools, bussing, and paved roads had not yet come to British Columbia. Government documents reveal that British Columbia had 44,945 students in the public system in 1910 under the supervision of 1,179 teachers and 1,121 trustees (London, 1985) or approximately one teacher and one trustee for every 40 students in the province.

The primitive roads, long distances, and harsh climate in the northern parts of the province made province wide travel both expensive and difficult in the early years. In 1919 a motion was put to establish "branches" of the Association throughout the province. There was to be one branch for each inspectorate area. That decision was particularly important to the small rural jurisdictions that made up the majority of

boards in the province but that represented a much smaller proportion of the province's students. The branch structure continues in an expanded form today.

Provincial Beginnings

In 1920 the Association, recognizing the need to be more accessible to rural trustees, met in the southern interior city of Nelson. The meeting was especially significant since trustees elected the first female president, Mrs. Irene Moody. This represented a substantial departure from the almost exclusively male trustee representation of 15 years earlier.

The first challenge to the Association's ability to represent the trustees of the province came in 1923. The Minister of Education questioned the Association's ability to represent the interests of all boards when most of the boards were not member boards in the voluntary association (London, 1985). These challenges have continued to the present.

In 1925 a provincial survey of education, the Putman Weir Report, was published. It was submitted to the Provincial Superintendent of Schools, S. J. Willis. The recommendations arising from the report were to play a significant role in the development of education in British Columbia over the next twenty years. The BCSTA had presented an extensive brief to the Putman Weir survey and saw many of its recommendations adopted in the report to Willis (London, 1985).

The shaping of education along the lines presented in the report was assisted

by Weir's appointment as Education Minister. He held the position for ten years.

From its initial meeting until 1925 the Association operated with volunteer staff. Trustees organized the annual convention and only the volunteer secretary was paid a small honorarium. The volunteer staff was at a considerable disadvantage in their dealings with the well-organized teachers who had formed the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) and retained a full time professional staff to manage the day to day business of its members.

The implications for the volunteer organization had been made apparent in 1921 when the New Westminster teachers took well-orchestrated job action to support their demands for a collective agreement. The public and press supported the teachers. The Board was forced to agree to a collective agreement (London, 1985).

In 1926 a small fraction of the boards in the province were members of the Association although this minority group of member boards represented most of the students in the province. Following the 1926 convention, the BCSTA sent out more than 1,000 copies of the convention proceedings to boards throughout the province to ensure that all trustees were aware of the important issues that the Association had discussed and the positions supported to the Minister of Education and his government. The concern about representation and non-member boards is a theme that regularly reappeared over the next 70 years.

In 1993 the Provincial Government moved to mandate a compulsory "Employers' Association" for all school boards in British Columbia although only 10

of the boards in the province were not members of the BCSTA at the time .

Boards Withdraw from Membership

The first withdrawals from membership in the voluntary organization by large and influential boards occurred in 1929. Oak Bay, an area directly east of Victoria, the provincial capital, proposed a resolution that saw divisive debate on the Provincial Government's desire to move to a four-year high school program. At the end of the day the Association dropped its opposition to the government's proposal after an address by the Minister of Education. The result of that debate was to leave the mover of the motion, Oak Bay, and the seconder, Victoria, displeased with the provincial association. They withdrew from membership. This began a pattern that was to continue with varying intensity over the next 65 years.

Provincial Bargaining

By 1931 provincial bargaining had become a government issue. The Association president expressed his concern about the proposal to establish a base salary for teachers throughout the province. He was worried about of the composition of the committee and the possibility of boards being disenfranchised through the process. A similar debate occurred during the data collection period for this research as the Association sought appropriate responses to the provincially mandated Employers' Association.

Amalgamation

The amalgamation of school boards was an issue at the AGM in Penticton in 1936. Acting president Mrs. E. Mahon reported to the AGM that the new Public School Act contained nine of the changes proposed by the Association in its report to King and Weir during their review of the Act. The much feared amalgamations did not appear. Only two regions, the Peace River block and the Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford area were affected at the time. Consolidations continued to be a source of concern and debate in 1993-94.

The late 1930s and early years of the next decade saw the Association membership grow from 109 to 161 member boards and the publication of the first Association newsletter in 1943. This was largely the result of the efforts of the former Secretary-treasurer, George Grant. In 1944, buoyed by the success of its first newsletter, the Association sought provincial government assistance in publishing another newsletter. The approval and support were forthcoming and a cheque for $290.45 was issued by the provincial government to offset the costs of publication (London, 1985).

By 1944 conditions had changed considerably because of the Second World War and improving economic conditions. London (1985) reports the Minister of Education, Mr. Perry, informed those assembled that of the 661 school districts that existed in British Columbia, 277 (40 percent) were under the control of 'official' trustees. The number of provincial schools districts had been reduced, voluntarily

since the Peace River experiment, from a high of 830 in 1932 to 661 in 1944, as 191 boards (176 rural, 15 municipal) were consolidated into 39 districts.

In 1944 Dr. Maxwell Cameron was appointed as a one person "Commission of Inquiry" to investigate and make recommendations regarding school finances in British Columbia. Cameron, and his views, were well known to the government of the day before the inquiry began. He received 75 briefs and conducted 27 public hearings before concluding:

> we must have much more equality . . . if we cannot have it without complete centralization, we shall have that too . . . (cited in London, 1985, p. 230).

Tax assessments at the time varied within municipal school districts by 400%, mill rates varied from fewer than 10 mills to more than 80 mills. Equalization payments for capital projects varied from a low of 20% of the capital costs to a high of 40%. Because of these concerns Cameron recommended a reorganization of school districts to ensure that they are

> large enough and powerful enough that their work will be a challenge to the trustees who control them and to see to it that these districts have financial resources adequate to their responsibilities . . . while he suggested that Government consult locally elected bodies, he made it clear that it should proceed with amalgamations without local approval. (London, 1985, p. 236)

The similarities in the identification of the problem and the prescribed solutions between Cameron's Report in 1945 and western provincial governments' proposals in the 1990s are startling. The reasons cited in Cameron's report could easily be substituted for the concerns that Alberta and British Columbia provincial governments

have expressed in the 1990s.

One outcome of the Cameron inquiry was a joint meeting between the BCSTA and the BCTF as they prepared their briefs for Cameron. The discussions are reported to have focussed on areas where the associations could lend support to one another's brief.

A trustee at the January 1945 meeting observed:

> I should explain that the B.C. Teachers' Executive is in a very different position from ourselves. You have permanent quarters, an executive secretary, etc. the most we can expect to do in our Brief is to prepare the general principles. (London, 1985, p.234)

That perceived imbalance between the groups would eventually lead to the changes that resulted in the hiring of an Executive Director 26 years later.

In September 1946 the consolidation of school districts continued as one of the 120 amendments to the Public School Act approved by the Legislature in the spring of that year, in response to the Cameron Report. School board elections in the fall would fill seats on 74 provincial school districts created to replace the 661 of 1944 (London, 1985). Amalgamation continued in British Columbia in 1996 as the province followed its decision to further reduce the number of school boards in the province.

Organizational and Governance Issues

Cameron's Report did not stop with the amalgamation of school districts. He was deeply committed to ensuring equalized educational opportunities throughout the

province. He was convinced that the process demanded the creation of an ability for small rural jurisdictions to attract good teachers. Rural districts were paying teachers $1,092.00 per year while the larger city schools were offering teachers $1,656.00 per year. The public was apparently ready to embrace a change if the editorial cartoon in The Daily Colonist, a capital city newspaper, is any indication. The February 1946 cartoon depicted two women in the "Labour Market display window." The woman on the right was a dishwasher with a price tag of $700.00 while the woman on the left was a well trained school teacher wearing an identical tag (London, 1985).

Because of the Cameron Report (1946), changing public opinion, a successful court challenge by the BCTF of the requirement for female teachers to resign their positions should they get married (1945), compulsory membership in the BCTF (1947), and the later change in legislation that required equal pay for female teachers, the BCTF found itself in a strong economic and political position entering the 1950s.

By contrast the BCSTA had lost trustees with the substantial reduction in the number of boards, had failed to gain compulsory membership for the remaining boards, and had no guarantee of operational funding to support the AGM or its newsletter. It was not a level playing field. As London (1985) observed:

> With increased, stable funding, a larger support staff, and the legal authority to speak for all trustees, the BCSTA would have been in a stronger position to deal with the BCTF on contentious issues. In considering the relative merits of compulsory membership, organizational stability and efficiency notwithstanding, there are no doubt many trustees who would, however, agree with professional staff member Chris Locke, who has stated, 'I think it is a strength in a group when a member can say 'I can withdraw any time I want, if I don't agree with or am not satisfied with the services offered.' (London, 1985,

p. 253)

The view expressed by Locke still has considerable currency in the organization today. The subject of compulsory membership, its advantages and disadvantages, was the subject of active debate in 1993 as the Provincial Government moved to create a compulsory Employers' Association rather than name the BCSTA as the compulsory trustees' organization for provincial bargaining in British Columbia.

The decisions of the 1950s and 1960s had a substantial impact on the decisions of the 1970s and 1980s as trustees selected an Executive Director and later voted to change the governance structure of the Association.

The questions of representation, compulsory membership, and financial stability led to some substantial changes in how the BCSTA conducted association business. As London (1985) wrote:

> There is no doubt that for the first forty years of the BCSTA's existence, difficulties of communication and the problem of generating unified action for a large number of school boards limited its effectiveness. (p. 305)

The problems were addressed, in part, with the 1946 changes that resulted in a reduction to 74 school boards through consolidation. That change resulted in 100% membership by boards by 1950. The increased membership and increasing effectiveness of the BCTF resulted in an expansion of the scope of the organization over the next decades.

In 1950 the organization was still largely an organization of volunteers. Total salaries for 1950 were reported by London (1985) to be $3,200.00. For several years

there were only two BCSTA support staff.

The budgets of the Association were to grow with the changing mandate. In 1950 the budget figure was under $11,000. By 1970 the Association had a budget of $417,491 and by 1980 the budget was 1.2 million dollars.

The Association's Position as an Educational Stakeholder

The political and economic turbulence of the late 1960s and into the 1970s resulted in power struggles between the BCTF and the ruling Social Credit government. Pensions, substantial inflation, and changing societal expectations resulted in increasing teacher militancy and eventually teachers voting to strike over a pension issue in spite of legislation that made strikes illegal for British Columbia teachers. During these government/teacher federation confrontations the importance of the BCSTA to the government and the BCTF was significantly reduced.

The problem was exacerbated by the uncertainty of many trustees about their allegiances to, or support for, either group. Trustees felt that the provincial government's fiscal policies were inappropriate while simultaneously feeling that something had to be done about the increasing demands of the teachers and their Federation.

Politically the Association had taken a very difficult position when it placed itself in opposition to the government of the day through a motion censuring the government for its fiscal policies. The tenuous nature of the BCSTA's continued

existence was recognized by its president, Peter Powell, who recalled a conversation that he had with the Minister of Education, Donald Brothers, "in which the latter discussed the possibility of closing down the Trustees Association, 'and he could have done so with a stroke of the pen'"(London, 1985, p.432).

Reorganization

The Association clearly needed to rethink its position in British Columbia's educational community. At the 1970 AGM a committee was struck to examine specific goals for the Association. "The Organization and Priorities Committee" was struck and directed to complete an extensive review

> . . . including its stated goals and objectives as revealed by resolution passed by Annual General Meetings and the Executive; its real goals as revealed by a systematic analysis of its allocation of money and staff; and the needs and desires of the membership as revealed by a comprehensive survey. (BCSTA Newsletter cited in London 1985, p. 445)

This was the beginning of a substantially different organization and an important milestone in understanding the events that were to occur over the next quarter of a century.

In 1971 the five person "Organizations and Priorities Committee" arranged for a survey of all trustees. The survey examined their opinions about the effectiveness of the Association and the appropriateness and adequacy of services. It also sought trustees' views on the appropriateness of the organization's governance and administrative structure. The findings of the Committee were not positive.

Dr. Jamie Wallin, an associate professor at the University of British Columbia, had assisted the Committee in its survey (London, 1985). Wallin found that leadership was a substantial problem with the president and general secretary working frequently at cross purposes. Further the general secretary seldom exercised his powers and when the general secretary did act, the president often disagreed with the action taken and countermanded directives. Such obvious and fundamental conflicts seriously reduced the effectiveness and credibility of the Association in Wallin's view.

His comments regarding the Executive Committee were no more encouraging. He observed:

> few persons actually get involved in its [the Association's] governance . . . Executive members are overworked . . . staff is reluctant to participate . . . committee appointments are usually made by the president, frequently without consulting senior staff . . . [and] those who could be of particular service are often overlooked. (London, 1985, p. 446)

His observations on communications, elections, cost of services, and policy were not optimistic. Wallin concluded that if the Association was to play a meaningful role in British Columbia's educational system it would have to be extensively reorganized. The centres of power and authority had to be shifted and trustees had to take a much more active role in the Association and its future.

The responses were immediate. The 1971 AGM struck an implementation committee to deal with the report of "The Organizations and Priorities Committee."

One result of the report was the elimination of the general secretary position and the appointment of an executive director. The executive director was charged with

different terms of reference and increased responsibilities.

The reorganization of the organization's administrative structure created four new divisions (Education, Public Relations, Personnel & Employee Relations, and Assistant to the Executive Director). Each division reported directly to the Executive Director. The Statistics, Economics, and Field Services divisions were eliminated.

The reorganization and restructuring were to take their toll on executive directors over the next few years. Frank Reder was appointed as the first executive director upon restructuring in 1971. By November of 1972 Reder was released. In early 1973 a former Cominco executive, Mr. Edward Benson was hired. The appointment was to begin on March 1, 1973. An interim executive director, John Burnett, was appointed to fill the period between Mr. Reder's departure and Mr. Benson's taking office. By May of 1973 the Association had moved to terminate the services of Mr. Benson and a previously unsuccessful candidate, Dr. Henry Armstrong, became the fourth executive director of the Association in August of that year.

Armstrong's appointment and the events that led to his selection are discussed in chapter five. The next section of this chapter provides a description of the setting which is important in understanding the Association's context.

The Setting

The BCSTA had two distinct and largely separate venues; Association headquarters and the meeting rooms of Field and Meeting Services. Association

headquarters was the facility that was controlled by the Association and served as the "service centre" for the Association. It housed the Association staff, with the exception of the legislative reporter and the editor of EduServ, the entrepreneurial and book publication branch of the Association. It was a small building with no convention facilities and no board room. The second venue of the Association, organized by the Field and Meeting Services, was in a variety of facilities that were rented on a short term basis for specific meetings and seminars. The major downtown hotels in the centre of Vancouver's business district served as the centre for AGMs, PCs, and Board of Directors' meetings. Some committee work also occurred in these facilities. Branch meetings were held throughout the province in a variety of facilities none of which were owned by the Association.

During the course of my field work trustees were infrequent visitors at headquarters although I was aware of almost constant telephone contact between Association staff and the trustees. With the exception of the Association president I did not see any trustees in Association headquarters and indeed some staff members commented on the fact that trustees are often "surprised" when they see the headquarters.

The Field and Meeting Services' main venues, large four star downtown hotels, not only provided needed meeting space but were also meant to reflect the professional quality of the Association's business. While interchanges by telephone were common, face to face meetings with trustees tended to be formal events held by

the Association in these downtown locations. There were meetings where Association staff, experienced in handling trustees' concerns, were able to present a sense of quality through the careful planning, coordinating, and delivery of these events. While the headquarters was the most permanent feature of the Association setting, it held less significance for the trustees than the settings used by Field and Meeting Services to host trustees during their work in Vancouver.

Headquarters

Headquarters for the BCSTA were located on the edge of False Creek in Vancouver, British Columbia. The inlet physically, although not visually, separates the Headquarters from downtown Vancouver, the centre for major corporations and the venue for major trustee activities.

The building, a contemporary flat roofed one story structure with underground parking accessible from the lane at the rear, was the equivalent, in area, of a large modern one story home.

It was configured in an "L" shape with the larger area facing south towards the street. The face of the building was largely glass.

The interior of the larger area of the building contained a large open area subdivided into work areas through the placement of relocatable dividers and other furnishings and offices along the walls. At the east end of the building were several senior staff offices including that of the Director of Field and Meeting Services. End

offices had outside windows and all offices in the area had windows facing the open area in the centre of the building.

At the west end of the north wall were three offices. The first was the office of the Associate Executive Director. The second office was occupied by the Editor of the trustees' newsletter, a contract employee. The corner space contained the office of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). It was the largest and furnished to adapt to both desk work and small meetings. The walls of the office were notable for the student art work that was professionally mounted and displayed along with key strategic planning documents. The tone established by the furnishings, the colours, and decorations was warm and inviting. Short debriefings and staff meetings were sometimes held in the office. A full staff meeting required that additional seating be brought in.

On the west side of the building was a small but well used library of professional materials and support documents. An office supply, photocopy, binding and work area with storage for current Association publications was located to the south of the library.

In the smaller section of the "L" were, on the east side, a small conference room furnished and decorated with the natural woods of British Columbia and a small lunchroom. The open central area contained the Employee Relations and Support Resource Services and this was the only area where the director sat in the same work area as other members of the area staff. The west side contained washroom facilities, a small office, and the entrance to the print shop. The print shop was housed in two

large rooms used to commercially layout and print a variety of publications for the Association and its entrepreneurial enterprise, EduServ.

The staff complement, including contracted employees, was 27 people with additional casual labour and short term contracts providing the flexibility to respond to changing needs according to the 1993-94 Trustee Handbook.

Not all staff were headquartered in Vancouver. The legislative reporter worked in the provincial capital, Victoria, while the editor of EduServ publications made his home in the interior city of Nelson, British Columbia.

Field and Meeting Services

Trustee functions cannot be easily accommodated within the existing Association headquarters and the Director of Field and Meeting Services is charged with the provision of suitable facilities to house the variety of provincial legislative and educational programs that the Association hosts annually. While some provincial meetings have been held in the facilities offered by the University of British Columbia, the majority of Vancouver meetings were held in major four star hotels in the heart of Vancouver's business district. The contrast between Association hotel accommodations and meeting rooms stands in sharp relief to the more modest facilities enjoyed by most local school districts and the many zone functions sponsored throughout the province by Board Development Services, Employee Relations & Support Resource Services and other service areas.

A trustee commented on her impressions when she attended her first Vancouver trustee orientation shortly after her election:

> Sometimes I forget that is how new trustees feel when they come in. Now there seem to be more sophisticated trustees . . . some people have more experiences of the world than I have had so they are not quite as in awe. This [New Trustees' Academy] was held in the Four Seasons Hotel. I had never been in a hotel like that in my life. I occasionally remember that too and how that affects new trustees when they first come. Because there are trustees from all over this province, including some very small centres, getting to a hotel like the Four Seasons for three days in an organization like the BCSTA is pretty heady stuff as a new trustee. . . .

Discussions with other trustees confirmed the initial effect of these surroundings.

Summary

The chapter reviewed the history of the Association from its founding in 1905 until 1972. The review was sensitive to issues that remain current for the Association, and examined the need for reorganization that was identified in 1970 at the AGM. The second part of the chapter describes the physical settings of the Association.

CHAPTER 5

A NEW STRUCTURE AND APPROACH

Introduction

This chapter explores the stories, organizational changes, and growth of the Association during the period immediately prior to and during Dr. Henry Armstrong's service as the Executive Director of the Association. It is based on the information provided in interviews with participants and a variety of public documents including London's (1985) work. The work reflects those perspectives.

Dr. Armstrong established a new relationship between the governance and administrative sides of the Association. He made significant changes to the practices and values of the organization creating many of the cultural and organizational practices that remained an important part of the fabric of the organization in 1993-94.

While there have been major changes in the Association, especially in the area of board/administrative relationships and the use of strategic planning, Armstrong stories remained a significant part of the definition that internal constituents offered to explain the culture and effectiveness of the organization.

The Decision to Change

The early years of the seventies were turbulent for the Association. Restructuring and reorganization of the Association to address the problems identified

in the report of "The Committee on Organization and Priorities" had been difficult.

As BCSTA President Smedley observed at the 1972 AGM:

> My short term of office has spanned some of the most significant and disturbing months in the history of . . . the Association. . . . It has been a period when problem seemed to follow problem, in rapid succession. (London, 1985, p. 451)

Both the tone and terms of the committee report are worthy of comment. Thirty-six proposals were made in the document "The Services and Organization of the British Columbia School Trustees Association: An Evaluation with Proposals for Change Presented to the BCSTA Executive."

Defining an Acceptable Candidate

The proposals included some specific requirements for the candidate who would fill the newly created role of Executive Director. The report identified the desired qualifications for the successful candidate:

- executive experience, preferably in senior level government (federal or provincial)
- advanced training in public administration, political science, or economics (in that order)
- **no previous identification with the profession of teaching or teacher training** [bolding added]
- no current active involvement with political parties
- preferably some previous experience as an elected public official, though not necessarily as a school trustee.

The decision to ensure that the Executive Director be unconnected to education was a significant one. It was consistent with trustees' views of themselves, at that time, as

financial managers and business people rather than representatives of education and children. The decision to ensure that the CEO have "no previous identification with the profession of teaching or teacher training" suggested that boards may have viewed their relationships with teachers as being adversarial rather than collegial. It also may reflect the belief that the secretary-treasurer was the "board's person" whereas the superintendent was accountable to the Provincial government and therefore less understanding of local needs or wants.

The discussions that occurred among trustees about the inclusion of secretary treasurers as members, the possibility of providing secretary-treasurer training programs, and similar discussions suggested a strong focus on the "business of education" and local control.

The First Steps

Three successive executive directors had been retained to work with the board and provide leadership for the Association's staff between late 1971 and May of 1973. Given the observations made by Wallin two years earlier, there was clearly a need for redefinition and change. The early attempts at change had failed in part because of the board's choices for Executive Director.

The first appointment was made by "converting" the general secretary into the Executive Director. Given the previous difficulties with the General Secretary and the President, outlined in the report presented to the AGM, the chances of significant

accommodation by either side to a new process and culture were limited.

The appointment of a former Cominco mining industry executive was spectacularly unsuccessful. Personal problems combined with the Executive Director's business background made the "fit" unsuccessful and within weeks of his assuming office he was dismissed.

The third Executive Director had been retained on an interim basis between the dismissal of the first Executive Director and the beginning of duties for the third. The effect of this appointment was to increase instability in an organization already in peril.

Dr. Armstrong had applied for the position during the competition that saw the third Executive Director appointed. He, therefore, knew something of the organization and the expectations of the Board. After the Board was forced to remove its third CEO in two years it made an important decision regarding the future of the Association.

Another CEO

The Board hired Dr. Henry Armstrong, an experienced teacher and secretary-treasurer. It may be that Armstrong's recent doctoral work in the area of educational finance and his previous secretary-treasurer experience were seen to offset his connection to the profession of teaching.

The story surrounding Armstrong's application and appointment is instructive.

At the time of the original competition Dr. Armstrong had been interviewed and was not the successful candidate. Dr. Armstrong had also applied at that time to the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) for the position of Executive Director. While it is true that the BCSTA board may have been unaware of Armstrong's application to the BCTF they would have been aware of his current employment as a teacher for a suburban Vancouver board and his interests in education.

The Associate Executive Director relates the story of Armstrong's hiring:

> Henry negotiated a contract with the Board of Directors based on the observation: 'If you want me to clean up and to build, you must give me the authority to do so.'
>
> Henry's contract allowed Henry complete latitude and authority in a very large number of areas. The Board did not approve appointments or firings. The Board did not get involved in [them].
>
> Henry used to say he changed it *from a social club to an organization that did something for kids.* That was how Henry viewed it. I think he was right. [italics indicate speaker's emphasis]

The Associate Director continued by explaining some of the tensions that were created by the latitude of Armstrong's contract and his determination to change the culture of the organization.

The initial contract with Dr. Armstrong had a significant impact on his relations with the Board and staff over his seventeen years of service. He had negotiated a contract that allowed considerable discretion on the part of the Executive Director.

While many might disagree with Armstrong's approaches there was unanimous

agreement among long term trustees who were interviewed and long term staff that the organization moved from an ineffective and often irrelevant player to a significant force in shaping the future of education in British Columbia.

A long serving staff member observed:

> You might quarrel with some of the methods . . . but I don't think you can quarrel with the outcome. I don't think you can quarrel with the honesty and the ability that Henry Armstrong used to attack the problem.
>
> There is no doubt that the BCSTA became a cracker jack organization. *He built a team.*

Armstrong's strong determined personality left its imprint on the way the Association was to develop.

The stories about Henry Armstrong formed a significant part of the culture of the BCSTA. No long term staff members spoke of the organization, its values, and culture without relating at least one Armstrong story. His values, beliefs, and administrative style have deeply influenced the organization and its history.

Dr. Armstrong

The Person

The Associate Executive Director, spoke of Armstrong's background prior to joining the BCSTA. He felt that it was an important part of understanding how the Association was to change.

He characterized it as "what drove Henry."

> . . . to understand Henry you have to understand his roots. . . . Henry lost his mother at a very early age and became, in many ways, the mother of the

family in Ireland, in Belfast. He developed a fierce independence and a colossal work rate as a result. He had the fierce Irish burning desire for justice and the Irish fighting spirit. He would not stop or rest or be intimidated in anyway by any authority [in the] fight for justice. That was Henry's psyche.

He joined the Royal Ulster Constabulary. . . . The Royal Ulster Constabulary . . . carries quite a meaning for the people who understand what the Royal Ulster Constabulary is and was.

It was . . . much different than it is now. . . . Then it was a different kind of organization, but it was a police force and Henry came with that background as a young immigrant to Canada. He came and found a job in an insurance company. He intended to start off quite differently. A young ex-constabulary police officer.

The Associate Director continued by relating the story of Armstrong's arrival:

He arrived with his wife and suitcase, bewildered in Winnipeg as he tried to make his way. This story will give you an understanding of Henry Armstrong.

He saw someone in Winnipeg that he recognized from the wanted posters. He left his bag and his wife standing on the corner in Winnipeg. Followed the person to where the person was living. Took all of the details. Went to the Winnipeg police force and presented all of the information. The person was arrested and taken care of. Henry then went back to pick up his wife who had been waiting these many hours to proceed with his business.

That's Henry Armstrong.

The story is also told that the Winnipeg police chief wrote to the Ulster Constabulary extolling the virtues of Henry and saying that it was absolutely unbelievable and letting them know what kind of person they had produced.

Henry tells the story of the head of the Royal Ulster Constabulary writing back to him in due course. A short one line paragraph. "We would expect nothing less from the Royal Ulster Constabulary."

That's Henry.

The Understanding of Democracy

Armstrong's understanding of the democratic process was different than his Associate Executive Director's and quite possibly the trustees of the day.

Armstrong's determination, at times, took precedence over more widely

accepted governance and administrative relations. These differences were, at least in part, to lead to Armstrong's leaving the Association some years later.

The contemporary Association view of governance and its relationship to administration were related in a respondent's understanding of the process:

> This is the distinction between government and management.
>
> Government is about priority setting, all the things that are worth doing, what is it that we should do, what we should not do. It is not about how can we do those things that we decide we want to do most efficiently and most advantageously. That is more about what management is.
>
> Yes, there has to be an overlap and a mixing. Management has to advise government about . . . the ability to deliver, what they want done, the cost of what they want done, and the consequences of what they want done.
>
> . . . government has to inform management about what is, and what is not, acceptable in the outcome. . . .
>
> That is a matter of working together and proceeding. The essential difference is that there has to be somebody who decides.
>
> It is Plato's question of who guards the guardians.
>
> Democracy's answer to that question is that the elected people are the ones who don't have guardians because the guardians are the people and that closes the circle. Therefore, you need the elected people to make the choices.

The Executive Director, at the time of the fieldwork, identified a similar understanding. In Strategic Planning in Education, Newberry (1992) identifies the prime responsibility of the board as setting the strategic direction of the Association, since it is the governing body.

He continued by relating the shared duties and responsibilities of both board and administration. He said that the crossing over from one side to another forced the governance and administrative components of the organization to create a team approach (Newberry, 1992).

Dr. Armstrong had difficulty with the crossing over by trustees or staff. He

observed: "They run the rail road. I run the trains." According to staff and trustees he was very determined to keep that separation.

A Difficult Situation

The Board had been in a difficult situation when it hired Dr. Armstrong. They needed help and understood that they needed help. The stability of the Association was obviously suffering with the rapid turnover of executive directors. Member boards were not reassured by the effectiveness of their Association and were becoming increasingly alarmed at the demands of their professional BCTF staff members.

The Association needed someone to provide the vision and leadership that would allow it to become a significant player in the British Columbia educational community. It found that person in Dr. Henry Armstrong. The characteristics that made Dr. Armstrong attractive to the Association would ultimately be the same characteristics that would render his services unsatisfactory to trustees years later.

An event that illustrates the tension between the administrative and governance roles relates to the British Columbia teacher child abuse case, the Noyes case. The Associate Executive Director tells the story.

> We got some reports that there was child abuse going on in the schools and that superintendents knew about it and had put it under the carpet. Henry went to the Board of Directors of the time and said; "We can't have this happen. It will destroy the system. We have to take the lead in fixing this." He presented some plans.
>
> The Board of Directors said, "No that's individual board business, we'll leave it to the board. We're not going to do it."
>
> I remember that it was in this office after that meeting Henry said to

> me: "Dammit I refuse to let kids be abused because my Board of Directors is gutless. We'll do it anyway."
>
> Now there is the dichotomy of Henry. He would throw his personal career consideration aside, his own safety aside, because it was right for the kids. But he was also willing to set aside the appropriate approved democratic process. He knew best. That was the dichotomy of Henry in many ways.

Armstrong's Appointment

Dr. Armstrong realized when the Board contacted him that he had a strong negotiating position to ensure that the definition of the job would suit his personality and the needs of the Association, as he saw them. A long serving member of the Association who had been with the Association prior to Armstrong's appointment recalled the effects of Henry's joining the Association:

> Henry Armstrong came on board I think in 1972-73. He stayed with us. He described himself to the staff as a change agent. He would be here for about five years.
>
> He lasted 16 years and through his leadership, he was a very strong Executive Director, at that time we were organized under an executive council, council of executive committee of 10 representatives from branches plus the elected board of directors or at that time the advisory committee.

His earlier educational experiences included a time as the secretary-treasurer of a northern Alberta board. His approach to problem solving in that context provides an insight into how Dr. Armstrong was to handle board/administrative difficulties during his tenure with the BCSTA.

Decision Making

One informant repeated a story about Henry told to him by a former Executive

Director of the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA).

Henry was the secretary treasurer and had been called to court to testify in the proceedings. Henry had a dilemma. He could tell the truth in which case he would lose his job or he could do what the board wanted and an injustice would be done to the individual involved. Henry was agonizing over this as the former ASBA Director approached him: "You seem upset. What is the problem?" Henry related the problem to him and before he could say anything Henry said: "Dammit, there's no problem. Let's get on with it" and went in and told the truth. The director is reported to have said that from that point on he had tremendous respect for Henry Armstrong and had absolutely no doubt of his integrity and his belief in truth.

The story is a significant one according to the staff member in understanding Henry's demise in the BCSTA years later. It is significant as an indicator of the type of risks that Dr. Armstrong was prepared to take to attain the desired results regardless of board direction.

That determination was to play a role in his decision to oppose the Board of Directors in the Noyes case, in his approach to the World Congress, and in his leaving the Association when a new governance and administrative structure was put in place.

Board/Administrative Relations

During Armstrong's tenure he maintained a clearly defined distinction between board and administrative matters. All problems, questions, reports, and solutions went

through Henry to the board. Internally, within the staff, there was substantial freedom to choose the *means* in addressing questions. But when

> it went to the Board it was the other tenet of Henry's administration. "Anything that comes to you, anything that is done by the BCSTA I did it. If you have a problem with anything that we do you deal with me. I'll accept the credit, I'll accept the blame and I'll take the consequences."

Staff who did not respect the clearly defined line did so at their own risk. One staff member observed:

> In Henry's days there were very strict lines of demarcation between staff and the board of directors. You mixed too much with the board of directors at your peril. There would be adverse inferences drawn. One person did leave the Association feeling that was the cause of why he was asked to leave.

Leadership Style

A trustee spoke of her understanding of Henry.

> . . . Henry was an old style leader, and he knew what it took to build a good organization and he did that. He was a good leader.

She continued, however, to observe that Henry didn't feel that the staff were necessarily entitled to due process but rather that he should be able to make arbitrary decisions. That lack of due process and his exercising of the contractual authority to deal exclusively with staffing issues led to concern on the part of trustees. There was a feeling that the approach was not appropriate and the trustee observed: "We certainly changed that."

Those changes were the result of the increasing maturity of the Association and according to a trustee at the time

. . . trustees were beginning to change.

More of them realized that they did have authority and they ought to be using it. Not having someone else usurp it and use it. That means they wanted their own voices in the organization. . . .

Staff Relations

Staff relations under Armstrong's leadership were challenging. Several stories speak to Henry's approach to staff relations, autonomy, and job security.

A story that remains very much part of the culture of the Association today relates to Henry's response to staff who expressed concern about the difficulty or size of a task.

Henry had a phrase . . . you gave people an assignment. Such and such and so and so. Go and do it.

People would joke. There is no way. Come on. How can that possibly be done?

"Listen my job is to make the policy decision. We're going to heat the Atlantic. Now you figure out the details of how you do that."

That was the way Henry worked. You had a tremendous latitude and freedom to get on with the job with Henry and he didn't interfere. If you said you were in trouble he would try and come and help but if you asked for help he would get someone else. He would never do the work for you and he would always require the outcome.

Committee Work

Armstrong's views about committee work and the role of trustees is related through staff stories about advice they received from Henry.

When I first started with the committee, things were not going well. Henry gave me a tape. The tape was "Peter and the Wolf by Committee" . . . absolutely brilliant. [It] starts off with a wonderful rendition of Peter and Wolf [sings] The singing stops and an announcer introduces the situation.

This is a study submitted by a y[redacted] composer and this group is

> receiving it and talking. "Of course!" . . . "No." . . . After much debate they change a note and it goes [sings with a discordant note interjected] and of course they change it again. Then they play the original version and the committee version. Of course the committee version is a cacophony. Henry's point was that what I was producing was the cacophony. Committees find it hard to produce "Peter and the Wolf." This was Henry's view of committees.

The story continues by relating Armstrong's views that:

> Committees never did anything in their lives. Committees have two functions. To decide what to do and to judge whether that's been done well. If you want something to sing get somebody to go away and do it and have the committee judge whether it sings.

Staff spoke about the approach that Dr. Armstrong used when he ran a committee. He would take the committee very highly summarized analyses with recommendations. "The trustees and the people on the committee loved it. Instead of getting the book and feeling lost there was clarity."

The view that a committee had at most three functions (decide what should be done; who should do it; and decide whether or not it has been done well) changed as trustees became more confident in their abilities to govern.

With restructuring the organization shifted to the kind of committee structure that is discussed in the "Red Book" when the Association wrestled with the thorny issue of provincial bargaining.

Staffing Practices

Armstrong's approach to staffing was the subject of discussion with every staff member who had initially been employed during Armstrong's tenure as CEO. His

approach was also discussed by knowledgable external constituents.

The hiring process

The approach that Dr. Armstrong took was a long and complex series of activities. On occasion it took up to two years to fill a position.

A staff director, who is a practicing lawyer, recalled the hiring process.

> It began with an advertisement in newspapers in major Canadian cities. Upon receipt the applications were screened by a staff member working in the labour relations field. She selected candidates for the next step.
>
> [Next] . . . the process was Henry took you out to lunch. Henry likes to take people out to lunch. You have probably heard about that. The lunch with Henry was very interesting.
>
> It was at his favourite haunt, it was at the Timber Club, and he was quite imposing as he was wont to be. But very, I don't know . . . I felt I could work in this environment. This is somebody who is kind of paternal and I didn't mind that, I wasn't offended by that, and he talked to me. He wanted to know what I was like as a person. Asked me questions about that and . . . he said:"Tell me about yourself".
>
> I said well professionally or personally?
>
> He said: "Go".

The director spoke about herself for some minutes and then:

> . . . asked some questions about the BCSTA.
>
> I guess I hit on one or two questions that interested him, around the labour relations area. The rest of the lunch was mostly me listening and avoiding choking on the cigar smoke.

When asked about the questions that Henry addressed or what interested Dr. Armstrong she replied:

> He was interested in labour relations . . . he had played quite an active role in it and he was interested in law. We talked about the criminal code and some issues that he had some concerns about. . . . The issues went back to his days as a policeman. He liked legal issues. . . .

The director reflected on her conversation with Dr. Armstrong: "I survived the lunch and I guess he thought I was docile enough that we would be all right together."

As a result of the lunch she was invited to move to the next step in the hiring process:

> writing the psychological tests and aptitude tests. They were a lot of multiple choice . . . I was trying to make a freedom of information pitch to Alan about two or three years ago to see them . . . he said: "No." He said he had chucked them all out.
>
> I thought that the test must have made me sound like I was an awful stick. . . .

After successfully completing the tests the director was invited back for the next step. The next phase was being invited for interviews.

> I think there were probably about six of us that made it to that point . . . that was a round robin process [you] went around the office talking to everyone . . . it wasn't everyone it was all the directors, the senior people, plus in the area I was working in.
>
> [T]he person in charge was away so it was actually the administrative assistant, the person who talked to me about the Field Services.
>
> Then in addition to the people in the office there was a secretary treasurer and a superintendent . . . who [were] part of the interviewing team. The board of directors had no part in this. That was very important to Henry.
>
> As far as he was concerned the hiring was his decision and this was a process by which he got people's impression of how we would react in different contexts.

When I asked the director about her feelings about the hiring process she observed:

> It exposes you to a tremendous amount of liability for human rights violations that is the negative side and would be very hard to implement in a school board where your hiring practices are under much more scrutiny than they are in an association.
>
> It gives you a very good assurance that the person that you hire will work well with other people in the office. You find out very quickly if the person that is very friendly and affable speaking to someone on a senior level is basically rude and impolite when speaking to someone at a junior level and that is important to know because we can't have that around here.
>
> It gives everyone a feeling that they have bought into the person and

the person does arrive on the scene not for the first time and they know they have the support of everybody here and everybody knows who this person is and knows that they supported them as well. Everybody has a stake in that person.

When asked about the implications of the hiring process for the new employee the respondent said:

> It is great. I mean it was a very. . . . I didn't feel nervous about whose toes am I stepping on. I didn't feel that anyone had any misapprehensions about what they could expect from me when I came with having no knowledge of schools or education or school law.
>
> I was expected to be able to work with the people that were here and they were expected to work with me. I think it is very positive from that standpoint. I think the negative, besides the legal liability threat, is that you may, you can end up with a one dimensional staff if you are not careful.

Another director related a similar experience in the hiring process and then observed:

> The reason I ended up taking it was because of the interview that I had. . . .
>
> I had the interview with Henry Armstrong, who was the Executive Director at the time. The conversation we had, ranged from highly philosophical to extremely practical.
>
> He asked me a couple of things which I still think about now. At that time, in part, I took the job so I could continue the conversation. It was really interesting.
>
> Some of the things that I still mull over are along the lines of the enlightenment of interest and why you do the things that you do. . . . We talked about just about everything, from philosophical bias to the potential for affecting change. . . .
>
> I still have conversations with myself at three in the morning when I wake up. . . . The extended interview had very little to do with what I expected as a work place, except in terms of the intellectual challenge that would be offered working here, and that was fulfilled. I wouldn't still be here if that wasn't true.

A third director relates a substantially similar story and offers his analysis of

the process:

> Henry believed that the most important thing a Chief Executive Officer did was to hire the best person. He had a very very elaborate process to get hired. Quite the most thorough and exhausting I've ever gone through.
>
> What he did is . . . this is from experience because I went through it. There was the usual ad and . . . I was in [Ontario] at the time so I went to Toronto and had a "chat" with Henry over dinner. It went on for two and one half to three hours. . . .
>
> The objective of the interview, in retrospect, was to understand the kind of individual I was in attitudes, in intellect, in a certain set of behaviours. He was trying to find out what made me tick. How I came to my judgments. How honest and faithful I was. He had a whole bag of tricks, of situations and questions, that where framed to do that. Some ideas came from experts, some were uniquely Henry's. He would probe, test to destruction, and try to provoke you.
>
> It was a masterful interviewing technique. Henry knew more about me at the end of that two and one half hours than I think I knew about myself. He was very gifted in it.
>
> He had a gift that was quite the best that I've ever encountered. Then the next step, if you passed that, you had to sit a set of tests.
>
> These were a set of psychological profile, task, and mental alertness tests. I think it's stretching it to call them I.Q. tests but there was a test there to measure how bright you were.

There are numerous other stories that speak to the same processes.

A very common feeling was expressed about the *rite of passage* that staff saw in the process. Staff felt they had run the gauntlet and survived. They believed that the sense of having made it coupled with the round robin process contributed substantially to their sense of identity and shared values that were also evident in many of the stories staff and trustees told about the Association and themselves.

Staffing choices

Dr. Armstrong held views about the characteristics that he would find in people

based on their birth position in the family. He preferred to hire the oldest or only child in a family and did so in several cases. One staff member, when asked about this preference responded:

> I'm the oldest (laughter). Can't you tell? . . .
> [It was] one of the things that was important to Henry. Apparently that is where you find the desired qualities . . . in the oldest or only child.
> There have been a lot of similar surveys. . . . Not that the oldest child has, "prima facie" desirable characteristics but maybe they have more drives and end up in more senior positions.

Work Ethic

Staff and trustees spoke frequently about the work ethic in the Association. It was a topic during several interviews and was observed during my field placement with the Association. It may have received more attention because of the serious illnesses that occurred prior to and during my initial contact with the Association.

Several staff members connected illness and the work ethic of the Association. A staff initiated workshop had been arranged to explore the issue with all staff.

The stories about work ethic fall into three categories: long term expectations, short term responses, and the relationship of work ethic to burnout, physical ailments, and family.

Dr. Armstrong had a tremendous capacity for work. A staff member recalled a telephone call from Hawaii while Henry was on vacation. He had apparently been thinking about the physical organization of the office and decided that a new arrangement needed to be made so he telephoned the office and gave instructions for

the change.

My experiences at BCSTA functions and within the office made the staff work ethic visible. I often arrived at the office well before the official starting time and stayed after the office closed for the day. I was very seldom alone during those extended hours. Several people worked late and came in for all or part of the weekend. Service was seen to be the fundamental issue and, therefore, the hours followed the tasks and were dictated by the need to provide excellent service to the trustees, the valued clients.

Heating the Atlantic

In the provision of excellent service no hesitation is shown because of the difficulty, or what other cultures might describe as the impossibility, of the task. The service ethic relates to the earlier story about Armstrong's approach if he said 'Heat the Atlantic'. That was the goal. The challenge for staff was to figure out how to do it and then do it, not to question the task.

A story is told by one of the staff about the provincial government's desire to amend legislation and the staff response:

> We get through a lot of work in this organization.
> A committee process, that in a normal bureaucracy might take six months, we'll do it in two weeks because that's the way we do it.

When asked if that was a legacy of Henry's or Alan's the staff member said:

> I think it is both Henry and Alan. Henry certainly insisted on that and kept it going. It was in the kind of people that were hired. Alan has got it too.

The participant then related an example of the approach that staff regularly took to extra-ordinary tasks.

> For example, we have a working committee on implementation. . . .
> It was clear from the dynamics of that process that it was imperative that bylaws and a constitution that was defensible be presented [to the government] to create bylaws and constitution from ground zero in a few days for [a new Employers' Association]. That is what we did.
> There was myself [and two other staff members]. We sat in the conference room, and I have to say the bulk of the work was [one director's], for obvious reasons, she's the lawyer. [The other director] and I burning the midnight oil, working around the clock. I didn't work around the clock but they did. We got that done in the order of days.
> Alan was insistent that happen. Quite rightly because it was so important to that process. We did it. That is built into the culture.

The Strengths of Staff

A staff member, when speaking about the Association and its strengths spoke of a fellow staff member:

> [She] is a lady that has suffered tremendously from physical problems. There is a sense of: Despite what has happened "I can do all of these things" and a sense of competitiveness. . . . Don't give into these adversities. I really don't know how that plays out.

Serious illnesses

Part of the way that it was seen to have played out by some staff was in the unusual number of people who have been affected by serious illnesses. But even the illnesses resulted in a greater willingness by employees to pitch in and make sure that the Association represented itself well no matter what the constraints might have been. Additional work ethic stories are recounted in parts of chapter six under **Staff Values**.

Work ethic, however, was part of the organization's culture and, therefore, was pervasive in the stories of the contemporary Association.

A sense of community

Staff spoke about their relationships within the organization. An important part of the sense of community was seen to be the result of a very careful staff selection process. The round robin process was important in helping to ensure a fit between the new employee, the Association, and its culture.

Part of the fit was identified in how the person related to subordinates. If there was a lack of respect when a person spoke to subordinates it was the feeling of staff that the person would not be an appropriate choice for the Association.

The Armstrong rite of passage hiring practices led to the development of a culture that had been maintained in the Newberry administration although the hiring practices were much more collegial, cooperative, and contemporary. However, the round robin process still informed the selection of new staff to the Association.

Celebrations. The use of celebrations was seen to be important to the community of the Association. Staff regularly shared food in celebration of a birthday, anniversary, or other personally important event. There were also impromptu celebrations which served to reinforce relationships and a general sense of well being throughout the organization.

Cookies were mentioned by several staff members in interviews and informal discussions. Cookies had acquired a symbolic value for staff. They were seen to represent sharing, respect, community, and support. They provided closure after long and difficult debates and also, on occasion, served as apologies or peace offerings after heated exchanges.

Risk Taking

For readers who may be unfamiliar with British Columbia politics an abbreviated history of the period from 1952 to 1994 is provided to allow for a contextual understanding of the outside constituencies that were impacting the Association during that period (Appendix A).

In the early 1980s the economic and political climate in British Columbia began to change from a free spending inflation driven economy to one where restraint had become the focus. The change in focus meant that the Association would have to change because member boards would no longer be in a position to support the rapid development that had occurred over the previous decade under Armstrong's leadership. The need to change, or adjust, was problematic for an organization that had become accustomed to rapid growth, increasing influence, and large budgetary increases.

Given Armstrong's record it was unlikely that he would find comfort in restraint, consolidation, and maintenance. The needs of the CEO, coupled with the Associate Executive Director's previous experiences and beliefs in educational

entrepreneurship, led the administration to consider different types of growth.

An entrepreneurial approach

The Associate Executive Director spoke at length about the forces behind the entrepreneurial approach and his underlying assumptions about the marketability of education.

> In 1982 the BC restraint program hit and in 1983 school boards began [to make cuts] . . . that was a challenge.
>
> My rhetoric had to be put into practice because the organization lost a lot of resources at that time. The budget was cut 28% in one year and the challenge was . . . to go out and demonstrate that you can sell entrepreneurially to sustain your organization. That is how I conceived the idea of EduServ.
>
> We put EduServ together and we grew it from 0% at that point and now its about 25% of our budget and I think there is more we can do and we should. It was exciting.

He continued by saying:

> . . . so we grew and we actively participated and the result was we moved from a situation where zero foreign students were in BC schools to one where there was a significant presence of foreign students. Not without its opponents, not without its critics, but we think we did something of value, we maintained employment, we brought foreign money into the system, we enriched the classrooms of our own kids by contact with other cultures, ideas, and people.

EduServ-- an entrepreneurial activity.

> . . . one of the things we did when we grew EduServ [was] to sell services . . . our comparative advantage in selling is that we have expertise in education. We can put it in a book and sell it and our books are a big winner. We are selling approximately $300,000 worth of books a year and that's almost exclusively, not quite exclusively, [books] written by BC educators and they are in great demand.

The result was to create a new organization focused, at least in part, on the

private sector values of profit and efficiency. The management board of EduServ was not the same as the Board of Directors for the BCSTA. The result led to the following participant observation: "This is a two piece organization. One is EduServ, which is the entrepreneurial wing, and one is the BCSTA."

The changes markedly altered the organization. While a director defended the position he recognized that some trustees had concerns about the appropriateness of the arrangement:

> [Dr. Armstrong] essentially established that [EduServ] because of, budgetary restraints and the like. [Government restraint] made it impossible to do some of the things he thought we should be doing.
>
> People [trustees] didn't understand EduServ particularly well. They didn't like it being beyond their control, I'm talking about the elected people, [they] didn't like it not being under their control and felt it was a drain on money, a drain on the resources of the Association.
>
> It was a drain on the personnel, certainly BCSTA personnel. However, it [EduServ] brought in money versus taking it out. But that didn't mean that's what people believed.
>
> They didn't like it. It was looked upon as one more of those things that Henry was doing to us.

The World Congress

An aspect of EduServ that was to play a significant role in the restructuring and redefinition of the Association was when the board of EduServ decided to host an international conference, the World Congress. A staff member recounts the story:

> [The World Congress was held] prior to the opening of Expo '86. That was held for two weeks at the opening and it drew about 7,000 people from largely North America. We did have representatives from Great Britain, Australia, and the United States.
>
> We drew speakers from the international community and directed their

> attention to education. [The keynote speakers included] David Suzuki and Carl Sagan, the futurist.
>
> They spoke at a plenary session at which we had perhaps an audience of 3,500 at one time. . . .
>
> "Why did we do it?"
>
> Because at that time there was a very black cloud over education in British Columbia. There were cutbacks, and restraints on school district budgets and it was an attempt to bring out the scope of British Columbia's part of the world. To look at the world and see what is happening in the classroom.

When asked about the relationship between the World Congress and EduServ the participant replied:

> [It] was part of EduServ. Yes, that was going beyond the scope of our provincial Association, our directive to assist and direct our attention to the BC School Trustees.
>
> That allowed us, under Federal Charter, to do the World Congress. It also allowed publications at the same time.
>
> We have expanded that. More working superintendents and other working people in the field . . . have written articles and books.
>
> EduServ has published them and through that they derive an author's fee and we derive some revenue from that.
>
> It is the scope from Henry Armstrong.

A Return to the Association's Mandate

Although it attracted substantial numbers of people the World Congress was not a financial success. That failure was followed by two others. There was an attempt to develop principals' conferences as a professional development event similiar to those run for trustees. It was reported by one respondent that boards, who were already paying substantial fees to the Association, were unwilling to pay the costs of professional development for their principals not only because of the additional costs in a worsening economic scenario but also because the principals had their own

professional organization. The other financial failure was an unsuccessful attempt at the establishment of a travel agency in order to reduce the travel costs of trustees and staff.

The Association re-focused its efforts almost exclusively on enterprises that supported the basic values of the Association and would be seen as appropriately the Association's "knitting." The publication branch became the economic engine that drove the entrepreneurial side of the Association. This refocusing may well explain the softening position of trustees towards EduServ according to some staff. Association publications enjoy good readership and support from trustees, school and district administrators, and a variety of other educators.

Beginning Dr. Armstrong's Departure

The last two years of Armstrong's employment with the Association were difficult ones for the Association staff, trustees, and Dr. Armstrong:

> . . . there were things that were not wonderful. When Henry disappeared, when Henry left, there was again a time during which there were all kinds of vacuums that existed in terms of leadership and direction and just being around. There was a fair bit of infighting that occurred as influence in position, at the staff level.
>
> People had no idea what was going to happen. A lot of jockeying for position occurred at that time. People were trying to carve out what their new role would be in the absence of any determination of how that would be determined. They were doing that on their own.
>
> When a question came up . . . like moving of an office it was huge it was completely out of all proportion to what was really being discussed. It really wasn't the office move that was being discussed it was positional power. That type of behaviour continued for about six months.

A staff member reflected on the end of the Armstrong era. She had joined the Association during the last two years of Dr. Armstrong's tenure:

> When I came it was also at the very end of Henry's term. So I was constantly hearing stories, what happened when Henry was in his hey day, and how strong the place was then. I would say . . . it was still what I would describe as a surprising[ly] effective organization, capable of doing really quite amazing things for really quite amazing people.
>
> But the membership at that time had pretty much pulled behind an agenda to get rid of Henry.
>
> Do you want to know why?

[Researcher responds] "Yes!"

The director's reply was:

> Henry was a brilliant man, a really interesting, a very caring man, a highly principled man and a bit of a dictator. He would do things because he believed them to be right and he would do them come hell or high water, which occasionally would tick off, at one time or another, just about everybody in sight. . . . I think by that point Henry didn't want to fight it anymore and so he allowed things to go on the way that they did.

As Henry was leaving it was an increasingly ambiguous time for the Association. The ambiguity resulted in organizational instability and staff feelings of insecurity although the period was substantially less difficult than the period immediately prior to Armstrong's assuming the leadership of the Association.

The reasons for Armstrong's leaving have been the subject of numerous debates over the years. There is still no one single answer for that question that is sufficient for all of the staff. Some of the reasons that were discussed, and appear in the literature of organizational change, include changes in the political and economic climate of the province, the changing needs of a more mature organization that had

gained an influential place in the British Columbia educational community, the changing needs of trustees to govern (a need that, ironically, was created at least in part by the well managed educational programs offered to new trustees about the nature of governance), the substantial financial failure of the World Congress, the board's feelings of lost control through the hiring of contract employees to pursue objectives that were not approved by the Association but rather by the semi-autonomous EduServ board, and finally by a diminishing interest on Armstrong's part.

Exemplary Service

Dr. Armstrong served the Association well and witnessed the fruition of his dream to make a significant contribution to education by building an effective organization. He, in the words of a friend and long time staff member, took the Association from *a social club to an organization that did something for kids.* His contributions lived on in the contemporary organization's culture.

Summary

The chapter reviews the decision to reorganize the Association and the turbulent times the Association faced as it struggled with the recommendations of "The Committee on Organization and Priorities". The chapter identifies the characteristics seen to be appropriate in a candidate for the newly created role of Executive Director for the Association. It continues by briefly describing the

difficulties the Association faced in finding a suitable Executive Director.

The second part of the chapter describes Dr. Henry Armstrong and outlines some of his values and beliefs. It describes leadership style, staff relations, committee work, staffing practices and choices, work ethic and some of the strengths of the staff.

The chapter concludes with a review of risk taking in the Association and the beginning of Dr. Armstrong's departure from the Association.

CHAPTER 6

RESTRUCTURING

Introduction

This chapter reviews the choices facing the Association as more difficult economic times challenged the Association's potential for continued growth and the nature of trusteeship changed. It describes some of the difficulties of the World Congress and the desires of some trustees to examine the roles of governance and administration. The chapter recounts the story of one trustee, Ms. Donna Jones, as she moved from parent volunteer to Association president. It concludes with an examination of the Tanton/Mitchell report and the search for a new Executive Director.

Changes Begin

The financial losses of the World Congress, the independence of the EduServ board, changing societal values, increasing organizational strength, trustees' uneasiness about staffing processes, and the new political influence of the Association created an environment where calls for change were inevitable.

Armstrong's Leadership

Given Armstrong's relationship with trustees and staff over the previous 15

years it seemed unlikely that he could or would accept easily a substantial reorganization of the Association or be comfortable with a new definition of the roles of governance and administration. While some staff expressed the view that had the World Congress been economically successful Dr. Armstrong would be with the Association today, that view was not widely shared by trustees or knowledgable outsiders.

Knowledgable outsiders saw the World Congress as symptomatic rather than causative of the uneasy relationship that had developed between the Executive Director and many trustees.

Although several trustees expressed a sincere appreciation of Dr. Armstrong's service and very much enjoyed their personal relationships with him, they felt a sense of uneasiness about his ability to accept the changes that were necessary if the Association was to move towards a more representative form of democracy and fully responsible trusteeship.

The Importance of the Ability to Read Situations

Dr. Armstrong was aware of the situation. Some respondents spoke about his ability to read situations. Others spoke of his behaviour towards the changes that were arising out of the Task Force on Communication and Governance.

> Through all of that one of the things that built the base for the BCSTA was that there was a strong solid consistent voice with a view of the world and a view that had the interests of the Association at heart.
>
> I worked on a consulting basis when they were working on the Task

Force on Communication and Governance.

That was a head to head yelling and shouting and swearing kind of a time with the people on the committee. It seemed to me they got through that and came out with a successful resolution in large part despite some hard head knocking because the Executive Director understood.

Where they had already indicated where they thought they needed to go he was prepared to bully if necessary, cajole if necessary, and bargain to get them there. It is a different kind of recommendation and that is where I am hesitant because we are talking about two characters, two quite different characters [Armstrong and Newberry]. Both with a really clear reading of the scene and that is what Simon Baddeley (1987) was getting at. He talked about being able to read.

The speaker then related a story about the ability to read situations and how important that ability is in an Executive Officer.

I was asked to go and help a superintendent at his request if I could, and I attended a board meeting and we talked about it afterwards and he said, "Well what do you think?" and he had been giving a report of which he was very proud. And I said: "Good report but maybe one of the reasons that you are finding yourself in the glue is because you are a heads down superintendent.

You are not reading what is going on. I saw so and so and so raise an eyebrow at each other and nod. Well you need to know at what point they did that. What had been just said that triggered that? Furthermore you needed to know enough about them and where their heads were on this issue to be able to say I think I know why they winked. And maybe you need to jump ahead and say and furthermore I think I know at the end of the day how they are going to vote.

You have to have that level of ability to read and to sense. And so I think in quite different ways the two Executive Directors can read and understand what is going on.

It was widely agreed that Henry had the ability to read situations and, therefore, it was most likely that he recognized, perhaps before the trustees themselves, that things had changed and that a new style of governance and administration was necessary if his creation was to continue as the kind of organization that could speak for the children

of the province and ensure the best possible educational opportunities for trustees to develop their skills as leaders.

Donna Jones: A Leadership Story

To understand the changes that were to occur to the Association, its structure and governance, it is important to consider the influences of two central figures in the events that were to unfold as the Association re-invented itself in the last part of the 80s, Donna Jones and Henry Armstrong.

Donna Jones's story provides one trustee's account of the motives and values that, at least in part, prompted these changes. The Henry Armstrong story in chapter five provided the context for the Jones story. Henry Armstrong had been a powerful influence in shaping the cultural and structural context for the Association since his installation as Executive Director years earlier. When the need for changes was recognized, trustees began a process of renewal that would ultimately lead to a transition to allow part of the governance responsibilities of the Association to move from the CEO to the governance body that had been developed (for the Association) under Armstrong's tutelage. The following story is included because it provides a portrait of the development of one trustee from helper, or servant in Greenleaf's (1991) sense of the word, to leader and can stand as an example of the type of learning processes that occurred throughout the Province as trustees gained the knowledge and confidence to meet the tremendous responsibilities of trusteeship.

Donna Jones

Jones's understanding of democracy and the responsibilities of trusteeship had a significant impact on the review of the Association, the implementation of a new organizational structure, and the hiring of a new executive director. While her story is not unique, and other researchers might well have chosen another trustee's story to illustrate the point, I believe that it demonstrates many of the elements that are essential to strong leadership.

Although Jones's participation and leadership are important in understanding the changes that were to come to the organization it must be remembered that she was not responsible for the formation of the original committee nor did she chair that committee until after much of the ground work had been completed.

The story of Jones's involvement should be considered, not from the point of view of what Ms. Jones did, but rather as a focus and example of the collective efforts of many trustees who became involved in the review and restructuring of the Association as its governance and administrative needs were altered. To identify the ways Ms. Jones was to approach her leadership role in the re-invention of the Association it is helpful to know of her story.

Kindergarten Helper to President: Leadership in Action

The Donna Jones's educational leadership story begins when, as a young mother and housewife, she became involved in her children's education. To that point

her story was not unlike many others. She was the mother of four children in a quiet residential area of Victoria, British Columbia.

Preschool: the early days

Jones's first interests in education were prompted by her realization that "education is different than other services. Education involves my children and nobody is going to mess with them. I have the right to be involved."

That sense of the right to be involved led to her volunteering as a preschool helper in the days before parents were a common part of the daily school community.

Ms. Jones continued with her involvements as her children worked their ways through the public school system. She says she never did learn to operate the photocopier nor did she bake many cookies. Rather she was involved with the critical issues of governance and the democratic process. She observes that this interest, through parent advisory groups, led to :

> a deepening interest and understanding, sometimes quite arms length from my own children, because **the interest was in the whole of the system** [bolding added] not just in my own children.

Politics at the Grass Roots

That deepening interest resulted in the realization that:

> in this district the major decisions were being made by the school board and parents were not involved at a district level at all. In fact there was very little involvement in schools in an organized fashion.

That form of representative democracy was uncomfortable for Jones who

preferred a more participatory process. The board decision to close a school became a focus for political action.

Getting Together: Participatory Democracy and Political Activism

One result of the "political activism" was that parents had come to know each other through the process. Those parents that Ms. Jones describes as "serious" came to realize that "the process was flawed." That realization led Ms. Jones and other members of the Margaret Jenkins group to attend forums at other schools slated for closure.

Ms. Jones says:

> We had our first meeting. There were about 50 schools in the district at that time. Twenty-three representatives attended the meeting.
>
> Some of the representatives were very loosely connected to the schools and most were quite leery about us. Many of them had no problems in their own school and they thought we were a bunch of political rabble rousers and were quite dangerous (laughs).

At this point Ms. Jones spoke of a decision that was to become typical of the political and organizational "good sense" that has characterized her involvement in education:

> At the first meeting we appointed a chair, pro tem, who had not been involved in any of this [the debate over school closures]. Those of us who had been angry and vocal decided that if this was going to be a viable organization we had better back off. We would not be part of the executive at all. I remember making that point. It would be useful for us to be members at large and act as advisors if people wanted us to. Most of us had fairly good organizations in our own schools. The nuts and bolts of how you get organized.

The Confederation of Parents Association

Having made the decision to put the organization first (to serve rather than to lead) the group was to grow in numbers and influence. The year was 1979. The organization still exists and is one of the strongest organizations of parents in the province today. Ms. Jones felt that it "has become a key to the success of the Victoria district."

The voice of the Confederation comes from all of the schools in the district and is called upon to represent parents whenever there is new policy to be developed that "will affect children and parents of the district." The group has a voice on all of the standing committees.

When Ms. Jones reflected on the process that led to the formation of the Confederation of Parents Association she observes that a substantial part of the success comes from the decision not to politicize the Association. She observed:

> It really was an organization for parents to become involved and take their rightful place as advocates for children and to get as much information to help them to do that as possible. You can't be helpful if you don't really have all of the information.

The belief in the importance of good information to allow participants to serve became a cornerstone of Jones' approach to BCSTA work.

Over the next five years Ms. Jones continued to attend school board meetings and over time others thought that she would be a good candidate and should consider running for school board election.

Ms. Jones: The Candidate

In 1982 Ms. Jones filed nomination papers and sought the role of trustee with the Victoria School Board. She quickly realized that while she was well known by parents and supported by parents that was not enough to assure election in the urban political setting of Greater Victoria. She was defeated at the polls.

Party politics

The following year she tried again.[4] This time she was approached by a political party that said they would like to support her in her election bid but they could not do that if she was not a party member.

> I said: "Well, I don't know. I have been representing a broad group of parents for years and years in one area or another and I have never been a party person. I have never been tied to a party. I have certainly shared a philosophy with one but that is as far as it went.
>
> I said I would have to think about it. So this person, he was an Member of the Legislative Assembly, said: "I'll phone you. You think about it."
>
> He phoned me and I said I want to know what I would be expected to do if I did this. If I joined the party and then accepted the help. . . . I was told I would be expected to do the best I could for my constituents and so on.
>
> I said I expected to do that anyway and what else? "That's it. That's it." I said: "Well, I was identified as a party member when I wasn't in the newspapers the day before the last election and chastised for being a left wing socialist so I thought I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb". So I did

---

[4] At that time elections for school board were held annually. The Victoria board had nine trustees. Four were elected one year and five the following year. The system allowed continuity within the board and in Jones' opinion ensured good accountability. Annual elections also meant that there were poor turnouts when it wasn't a municipal election year. The New Democratic Party was often successful in "off years" while the Social Credit Party was frequently the successful party during municipal election years.

that and was elected.

The Board Table: A School Trustee

Ms. Jones joined a "very politically divided board" upon her election. And while "politics were not supposed to be in place [they were]. It was all under the table." She describes the situation:

> There was the Social Credit party on one side and the New Democrats on the other and they fought tooth and nail around the board table. They had been divided 4:5 or 5:4 for some time and . . . when I came on it was a 5:4 split with the Social Credit holding the balance of power.

This was 1983. She describes the situation as being the norm for urban boards at the time and she felt as though she had fallen into the middle of something "with a bang." The political lobbying began almost immediately upon her election and although she sees herself as being quite naive she was able to read the situation and understand its implications:

> the day after the election I was phoned by a couple of other trustees and told that there was going to be a small meeting in somebody's rec. room and would I come. That was on a Sunday morning after the election. Two trustees wanted to talk to me.
>
> The objective was to lobby me for support for a chairperson and vice-chairperson. I hadn't given that any thought. I guess it had been the rule that whichever party held the power they elected the chairperson and vice-chairperson. They had the most votes. Of course it looked better if you got lots of votes not just the five of the winning side.

Ms. Jones reflected on the discussion and postponed her decision. She then considered a mentor, a person who had long service as a trustee, as a possible candidate. While she realized that the person would not be elected to the chair she did

feel that the trustee should be part of the selection.

Introducing change

She says she thought: "I think that it might be useful if we could change the tone here. If we divided the job." That understanding of the importance of tone and process continued to be an important part of Jones's approach.

She wondered why, if the majority had the chair, the minority group couldn't be given the vice-chair. "Maybe if they worked together we could make a difference." That belief was to resurface frequently in her work on the BCSTA's behalf over the next years.

Over the previous five years that Ms. Jones had been attending board meetings she observed:

> It didn't matter who had a good idea if it wasn't supported by the majority party it didn't go anywhere. It seemed that it was time to make a change. . . .

She continued the story of the selection of the chair and vice-chair:

> So there was another person elected at the same time I was. His father had been a Social Credit MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. He was elected as a trustee too and I know that he had some political high hopes for the future but meantime he was just a brand new trustee. Just like me.
>
> He lived not too far away. He had been called to one of these little meetings too. He phoned me and he wanted to know what I thought. I said come on over. He sat in that chair and we talked for about two hours.
>
> I didn't know what would come of that but I talked about what could happen if we just made a decision around these two positions.
>
> I didn't know what he was going to do.
>
> We had our election [for chairpersons] and it was this person's vote that did that. The other side was mightily annoyed I want you to know (laughter).

The following year the New Democrats had elected a majority to the board and the principles that had been advocated while "in opposition" had to be put into practice.

The election resulted in the chair going to the New Democrats and the vice-chair going to the Social Credit supporters. The principle of "sharing the job" became part of the culture of the Victoria School Board at that time. "That change resulted in improved . . . work on the four standing committees."

Until this point standing committees had become almost dysfunctional. Ms. Jones had been elected chair and decided that a change was needed in the make up of committees. "I thought that the best way to do that . . . to have a functional committee was to make sure that they were balanced. So you had a good debate at the committee level."

That opening up of the committee structure to encourage a good debate helped to ensure all voices were heard. The change in the committee make up led to a further change a few years later when representatives of the unions and parents were invited to join the committees. Those changes in committee structure were things that Ms. Jones had identified as being important during the election campaign. They reflected the ideal of participatory democracy that had been fundamental to her earlier work at Margaret Jenkins School.

While the time that Ms. Jones spent on the Victoria School Board is important in understanding how she arrives at her decisions it was her involvement with the

BCSTA that was to have a wider effect on education in British Columbia.

An Introduction to the BCSTA

In March of 1983, three months after her first election, Ms. Jones attended the second in a series of seminars presented by the BCSTA that were held for new trustees (New Trustees' Academy).

The new trustees' seminars

Ms. Jones was once again impressed by the importance of process and respect:

> We learned. BCSTA impressed me terribly. These were a well organized group of people who had . . . who gave me the sense that they cared about whether or not I was receiving the service that the board was paying for. . . .
>
> The people that were running the seminar were thoughtful, they cared about each trustee. This was my first impression. I was terribly impressed by the speakers.
>
> There were speakers telling us, or explaining to us, or having us do an exercise around the development of policies. Policy development was certainly new to me.

Ms. Jones continued her story about the new trustees' seminar and spoke of the changes that have occurred in trustees over the last decade. She felt that new trustees were more sophisticated than she and earlier trustees had been, and had more experiences of the world than she had.

Over the next two or three years Ms. Jones observed that she continued to:

> take advantage of everything I could with regard to the BCSTA because I couldn't see how I was going to do my job without some help.
>
> I was really pleased that there was an organization that would help me

to understand the job - from a detached point of view.

Strengths of the Association

One of the real strengths of the BCSTA for Ms. Jones was in the provision of assistance directly to trustees. The BCSTA was not seen to have a "hidden agenda" but rather it was seen to be a professional resource that provided assistance in a non-threatening environment where trustees could discover and develop their capacities to govern. She says: "This wasn't our administrators telling us how to do the job. This was an organization telling us a little bit about our responsibilities overall to be policy developers." Ms. Jones continued by talking about the differences between boards throughout the province as those differences related to their approach to the questions of policy and administration.

> There are boards in this province right now who are not really encouraged to do much of anything in an innovative way. If the administration doesn't approve you don't push it. I find that astounding but it is still going on.

BCSTA services. When asked about the kinds of help that she was offered by the BCSTA she outlined a variety of services. The first service that she mentioned was the publications produced by the Association:

> they have always had publications that kept us up to date on education and on anything around legislation that happened about education they always made sure, always have made sure, that trustees had up to date information and analysis of what the legislation means. . . .

Ms. Jones went on to speak about how she gained her understandings of educational

issues with the BCSTA. A voracious reader, she observed that she read every piece of paper she received from the Association in the first five years of her involvement.

Ms. Jones spoke of the kinds of information that she received from the Association and the staff's ability to anticipate the information that trustees needed to have to do their jobs. These issues included policy development, the democratic process, and some of the legal ins and outs and the rights of students. Ms. Jones spoke of the difficulty of meeting the needs of such a diverse group of individuals from such distinctly different communities.

The Importance of Trusteeship

She also spoke of the importance of trusteeship and the failure of many people to recognize the enormity of the undertaking:

> this is a big big business that is extremely important. A lot of money. A lot of money.
>
> The Victoria School Board is the third, or fourth, largest employer in the area. People don't understand that. We are responsible for 3,000 employees and next year (1994) [we will have] a one hundred and twenty-seven million dollar budget.
>
> If you are coming from a position of having been a home maker and you are faced with several millions of dollars that you have to make decisions on you need all the help you can get.

That needed help is provided, in the view of Ms. Jones and other trustees that I spoke with, by the BCSTA. She said: "I guess I just felt confidence in that organization from the beginning."

The Importance of Henry

She credited Henry Armstrong with building a substantial part of the organization that she came to know in her early years of involvement with the BCSTA. She continued by reflecting on her relationship with Henry and her subsequent understanding of Henry's management style:

> Henry was slightly paternalistic but we always got along fine. He was a challenging person to debate and I always enjoyed a good debate. We had some mutual respect, I think, from the beginning. I guess the differences in the organization at that time were [about leadership]. . . . Henry was an old style leader and he knew what it took to build a good organization and he did that. He was a good leader.

She continues to speak of Henry and his inability or unwillingness to deal with staff in a more "democratic" manner:

> . . . people that worked for the Association sometimes appeared and disappeared and we would find out later why they were gone. It didn't seem appropriate to me after I got involved and we certainly changed that.

Ms. Jones then spoke of her early involvement with the Association at a level other than as a seminar participant or speaker to a resolution at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). She said that after three or four years she received a call from the President of the Association.

The First Provincial Appointment

The president had called to ask if Ms. Jones would sit on a committee that had been in place for a while. It was the "Communications and Governance Committee."

The committee had been charged with identifying a process to examine the governance of the Association and decide whether or not its structure was appropriate and doing the job. The committee had been struck somewhat earlier in response to some dissatisfaction that Ms. Jones had not been party to. She observed: "I didn't know what the issues were. I didn't see anything much wrong with the organization."

She felt no particular loyalties to the old structure since she was still relatively new in her involvement with the Association. She said: "I was just . . . neutral around the issue of whether or not it ought to be changed." She accepted the invitation to join the committee and began her more formal political education in the BCSTA.

The first meeting that she attended was in 1986. She remembered:

> The first meeting I attended was quite funny. I didn't know any of these people. I had met some of them and knew of them and had listened to them speak but I had no personal connections with them. That in itself was quite interesting.
>
> I was astounded because they seemed to be quite an ineffective committee. They argued and fought. There were obviously factions there and I wasn't clear why or how deeply these issues ran. But I listened mostly to arguments the first time. . . .
>
> We had a couple of meetings like that. Henry [Armstrong] seemed to be around the edge because, frankly, I don't think Henry thought anything should change at all.
>
> This was being pushed and Henry would facilitate it but I didn't get the feeling that he was too willing to do that. That was just my impression at the time.

The reasons for Jones' invitation to join the committee were made apparent later when she received a telephone call from another trustee. She then learned that she had be asked to join the committee only after another trustee had quit the committee in disgust at its behaviour and progress. Initially, she hadn't known that she

was "filling in for someone who was disgruntled with the whole process."

The committee continued to meet although its effectiveness remained problematic. The leadership of the committee was being provided by its second chair. The first chair had been fired by the Association president earlier because of an unpopular position that he had adopted on an issue. The second chair was "a really nice person" according to Ms. Jones although she remained somewhat ineffective at "controlling this disgruntled group of people." The health of the chair failed and she was forced to resign. Ms. Jones was asked to assume the chair:

> So I said sure. I have always said yes and then wondered how I would do it later but (laughs) . . . generally it was not a bad committee. These were good bright people.

An Important Decision

The resignation of the previous chair left the committee with a vacancy to be filled. Ms. Jones, as the new chair, took the opportunity to establish her leadership. She had come to know some of the trustees around the Province and had identified some of the people that were critics of the committee.

> I have felt for a long time that it is really helpful to put critics on the team and get them really involved and help them find . . . let them find the solutions if they can see some problems. Sometimes that strengthens organizations and in fact that helped.

Under Jones's leadership and with the appointment of a vocal critic to the committee some rigorous debate of fundamental issues took place. The result of the debate was a proposal for a new structure for the Association. At that point the Committee went on the road to poll trustees from around the province to ensure that

the proposal that would ultimately be presented to an AGM fairly and appropriately reflected the consensus of the province's trustees.

> Once we came to some agreement on the committee about a possible structure we went around the Province and attended branch meetings. Two or three of us. I went.

The branch meetings were fairly intense as trustees debated the appropriateness of one particularly important but contentious issue: Provincial Council and one member one vote.

The proposal called for a restructuring to allow each school board in the province, regardless of student population, to elect one member to sit on a Provincial Council. The Provincial Council (PC) was to become the "parliament" of the Association. That change would substantially alter the tasks that had traditionally been the responsibility of the Board of Directors and the Branches.

A branch meeting

Ms. Jones recalled one branch meeting in the northern most reaches of British Columbia. The meeting was held in Fort Nelson, a small gas and forestry town on mile 300 of the Alaska Highway.

> It was a northern branch meeting and at the time it was my job to explain what was going on. Or what the plans were and to get people to ask questions and voice their concerns. We were trying to answer all of that and I made the decision at that point that I found myself going up on this little stage and thought I'm not doing this by myself. I'm going to get this person, this was the critic that we had gotten onto the team. I said: "You come up here. You're part of this committee and people know you but most of them don't know me. Let's do this together."

The Importance of Process

She continued the story by saying that the decision to include this critic in the process was a good one. The trustees in the north knew and trusted the critical member of the committee while Ms. Jones was simply somebody from "the big city in the south who thought she knew everything." That feeling is not uncommon in the northern part of Canada. The process of consultation with branches continued until the committee was confident that they could produce a proposal that would be ratified by the whole membership at an AGM.

The process of shepherding the proposal through the AGM was to fall to Ms. Jones as the committee chair. She said she remembered the day vividly. She could recall the weather on the day in the fall of 1987 when she rose to present the report from the Committee. She recalled the process:

> I remember someone telling me at the last minute that it would be my job to bring these motions through the Special AGM. We hadn't had that discussion.
>
> I don't know who I thought was going to do it. I guess I thought the president was going to. No. They decided I was the Committee chair and I was going to do that.
>
> I remember sitting at a table near the podium and thinking: "Alright. These are the motions that we have got to present to the AGM to bring this new organization into being."
>
> There were still people that didn't want any changes and they were muttering on the side lines and Henry still wasn't comfortable with it although he didn't say too much. . . .
>
> I remember sitting there thinking I have to get some words on paper around these recommendations. We have got to sell this to the disgruntled . . . out there.

At the end of the day Ms. Jones had presented the motions to the AGM and

they had received the approval of the Special AGM.

When asked about her understandings of why the new structure had been approved she said:

> It changed because trustees were beginning to change. More of them realized that they did have authority and they ought to be using it. Not having someone else usurp it and use it. That means that they wanted their own voices in the organization. . . .

The sense of the importance of voice was discussed by trustees who had voted for the reorganization of the Association. There was a wide spread feeling that although the branch structure was valuable the trustees were no longer content to have one representative from each branch speak for the independent school boards that made up the branch. No one was willing to accept that the director they elected at their branch "is going to speak for all of us on all issues. This is the way it had been before."

Provincial Council

While the elections of Directors to the Board continued, the new Provincial Council (PC) "became the body that had the authority to set the budget for the organization, approve the processes by which the fees were collected and make decisions on issues that arose between AGMs."

The unique characteristic of PC was the concept of one member board equals one vote (rather than representation by population which had been the traditional approach). The concept was seen, initially, to be a large stumbling block for large urban boards whose members had more students in one high school than some small

boards had in the whole of their jurisdiction. Ms. Jones recalled some of those conversations:

> I remember some big boards saying well there are a lot more small boards and they could all gang up on us and they could make decisions that would affect us and we wouldn't be able to do that.

Ms. Jones was from one of the largest jurisdictions in the province and her credibility with the membership and the location of her home jurisdiction were likely important factors in gaining the agreement of the large urban boards. She had established herself as a bright, politically astute director whose "word was her bond." That credibility combined with the opting out that was possible with voluntary membership was to eventually hold sway and the PC was approved at the Special AGM. Again Jones's comments captured the essence of that understanding:

> . . . I have this Mary Poppins attitude. I have had [that understanding] all my life and that is that trustees, by and large, are honourable people and understand that there is a bigger world out there and that the decisions that we make always have an impact somewhere else. . . .
>
> I know that. I have enormous faith in the fact that people . . . consider that when they are making decisions and that there had to be some trust among colleagues, among elected trustees no matter what size of board they represented.

She continued by saying that she was confident that people's good sense would prevail because all of the decisions were taken after a good open debate.

> People listen to each other. They are not just hearing themselves talk. They can be persuaded by effective speakers and common sense and by being presented with good data, with information and solid support.
>
> We always got that from the BCSTA. Our processes for providing information to trustees before they make their decisions is excellent. It could be emulated by anybody with success it seems to me. We have gotten better and better at providing background information.

Ms. Jones Becomes a BCSTA Director

Although she said she had not considered the next step in her Association work she was asked if she was going to run as a director at the next regular AGM. After some thought she decided to run for election to the Provincial Association as a director, and she went on to win a seat on the Board of Directors for the Association.

The Vice-president

During Ms. Jones's first term in office, the vice-president of the Association faced a local school board election and lost her seat as a trustee. Under the bylaws of the Association that loss required that she resign as vice-president. The constitution provided for such an event and called for the automatic replacement of the lost table officer by the director who had obtained the highest number of votes in the directors' election. Ms. Jones was the director who was to be appointed under the constitutional process. The result was that she assumed the position of vice-president part way through her first year as a director of the Association. She continued in that role until the next year's AGM at which time she sought the nomination for vice-president and was successful.

During her first complete term as vice-president she was frequently called upon to represent the Association on the President's behalf. The President was serving his third term as president and his employer had become substantially less cooperative

about granting the time that he needed to complete all of the tasks of office.

One of the experiences that Ms. Jones had during this time was to sit on the "Education Policy Advisory Committee." It was a provincial committee that represented a broad range of educational groups in addition to business, science, the arts and others. She described the experience as particularly helpful in her learning more about organizational processes and most especially in getting to know a broad range of people from different backgrounds throughout the province.

A second major role was her appointment as Chair of the Executive Director Search Committee that was formed upon the receipt of Armstrong's letter indicating his decision to retire as the Executive Director. This committee's decisions were to have a significant impact on the Association and its future.

Process

The Executive Director Search Committee, under Jones' leadership, began the search in much the same way as she had approached challenges in the parents' group, the local school board, and the debates in AGMs. The process was as important to Ms. Jones as the search.

Under the direction of the Board of Directors the group began by identifying "how people felt about how things were going, their vision of what the leadership should look like . . .we changed the kinds of values that were afloat in the organization."

The accurate identification of needs was important to the Committee and the future of the Association. Ms. Jones and her Committee had recognized the importance of their structural changes (made at the Special AGM) and knew that it was critical that the fit between the new values "afloat" in the organization be recognized and supported by the new executive director.

A decision was made to hire outside consultants to advise and assist the Committee in the selection process. The selection of the consultants was significant.

Several consulting firms were interviewed as potential contractors to assist the Association with the process. The firm of Tanton/Mitchell was selected, partially on their work with other groups around British Columbia, and their work in the hiring of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). The fundamental reason for the selection of Tanton/Mitchell was their respectful attitude towards trustees and staff:

> These were people [Tanton/Mitchell] that respected everyone they dealt with and [they] talked to them in that manner.

Some consultants had shown little understanding or respect for the trustees and their opinions. The very strong feeling of the Executive Search Committee and the Board of Directors was:

> each one of them [trustees] is elected by their group, by their community . . . . Each one of them deserves the same kind of respect as anybody in Vancouver. Their opinions count and their views are needed in the organization.

Tanton/ Mitchell interviewed a broad range of trustees throughout the province about "what we [BCSTA] were doing and how it was working." The first interviews indicated that things were still "a little rocky" in the area of organizational structure.

The Committee and Consultants used those initial impressions to improve on the delivery of services in the new structure. Follow up interviews reflected that improved delivery. The PC began to function better as the organizational problems were identified and resolved. Ms. Jones observed "now it is hard to find people who think that the structure isn't working for us. It is very democratic."

Jones's earlier position regarding the resignation of Dr. Henry Armstrong was important:

> I hadn't been involved in this, from the old Executive Director Search Committee. Some people wanted him to leave. Some people wanted him fired. Other people were staunchly supportive of Henry. I hadn't been involved in that at all. I am really grateful for that because the organization had to continue to work and if you are terribly involved in the strife it is really hard to make an organization work. I didn't have any ownership of the battle.

Tanton/Mitchell Report

After an extensive review of the Association, Mitchell (1989) presented his report to the Board of Directors and the Executive Search Committee. In reviewing the report, the Executive Search Committee found guidance that would help them develop a "profile of the person that we would need to fill this position."

The report helped the Committee develop a statement of values that would ensure that the person selected would "fit" with the Association's re-invention.

> We wanted someone who was committed to some strategic planning . . . some strategies based on some value statements and some basic goals . . . the ability to manage . . . and a sound educational philosophy . . . that we thought would be shared by the majority of people. . . .

When asked about the educational philosophy and what that meant to trustees

the response was:

> the personal values . . . that are reflected in what you do and how you act and how you treat people and the ability to include . . . include everyone and respect them. We wanted a respectful organization at all levels.

A candidate profile

Tanton/Mitchell developed a "Candidate Profile" for the new Executive Director based substantially on the trustee wishes identified in the Tanton/Mitchell Report. The profile outlined both the general and specific qualifications that an ideal candidate would possess. The ideal candidate will:

> possess strong leadership skills, [have] experience in a senior management role in an educational focused organization and have the ability to:
>
> - lead the development by the Board of Directors and implementation of a strategic plan to achieve the mandate of the Association and to continually review and recommend refinements to the plan in light of changing circumstances.
> - provide strong, effective leadership to all involved in the Association.
> - develop effective relationships with trustees, government officials, post secondary institutions and other affiliated organization in the educational field (1989, p. 22).

The report also identified five areas of specific qualifications and listed details of the expectations in each area. The ideal candidate was described as one who had a strong academic background, extensive experience "in an educational environment", and a strong understanding of public education along with experience in a private sector.

Further qualifications included a "successful track record and a leadership role involving extensive involvement with people" (p. 22). There was a preference for a

candidate who had experience in a role that reported to a Board of Directors. It was also expected that the ideal candidate would have a minimum of 10 years experience in executive roles.

In the area of "functional skills & knowledge" it was expected that the candidate would have "a broad knowledge of the education system and an appreciation of the issues which are currently impacting the system" (p. 23). There was also a desire that the candidate have strong planning, organizational and administrative skills along with a familiarity "with the processes of government and . . . [would be] effective in working with all levels of government officials" (p. 23). Finally, in the skills and knowledge area, there was a desire that the candidate understand the function of a volunteer board of directors and be able and willing to work with the group and that the candidate respect and understand the nature of governance and its appropriate relationship with administration.

"Relationship skills" were identified as the fourth area of specific qualification for the successful candidate. The report listed five skill areas:

> 4.1 Enjoys people; will be open, approachable, diplomatic, tactful and politically sensitive while possessing the ability to lead people to achieve objectives.
>
> 4.2 Strong leadership skills; an effective motivator of people; a team player.
>
> 4.3 Able to be effective in a CEO role within a membership based association where the development of consensus among differing interest groups is critical to success.
>
> 4.4. Will possess the presence, stature and communications ability to generate respect among and relate effectively to trustees, business and industry leaders,

> government officials and the various other stake-holders and publics with an interest in public education.
>
> 4.5 Effective manager; able to recruit top calibre employees; delegate responsibility effectively; develop the capability of employees to capitalize on their full potential; and assess performance. (p. 23)

The ideal candidate profile concluded by describing the "Personal Characteristics" of the person to be selected. It began by saying the person needs to be a strategic thinker and have a global view. The candidate must be "a visionary who can conceptualize the future of education and translate that to the issues that the Association should be considering today" (p. 23). The profile then enumerated other characteristics which included: innovative, creative, highly intelligent, excellent judgement, good common sense, deals effectively with competing demands, confident, mature, and "has strength of character yet very open and receptive to views of others," a facilitator, consultative, achiever, positive attitude, high energy, high level of personal integrity and finally a "[p]roven track record of accomplishment in previous positions" (pp. 23-24).

The Tanton/Mitchell Executive Search recommendations and the Board of Directors and Executive Search Committee's responses were important in understanding the changes that were to occur for staff and trustees involved in British Columbia education.

The planning of the transition, the use of an interim leader, the recognition of the extended period of ambiguity prior to Armstrong's leaving (during the initial governance and administrative review), the uncertainty during the Associate Executive

Director's temporary appointment as Acting Executive Director and the ongoing need to provide board and trustee services were all organizational stressors during this period.

The interregnum

Staff recalled the interregnum period between Dr. Armstrong and Dr. Newberry:

> When Henry disappeared, when Henry left, there was again a time during which there were all kinds of vacuums that existed in terms of leadership and direction and just being around.
>
> There was "in fighting" that occurred [as people sought] influence . . . at the staff level. People had no idea what was going to happen . . . people were trying to "carve out" their new roles in the absence of any determination of how that would be determined . . . .
>
> When any question [arose] like moving of an office, it was huge. It became completely out of all proportion to what was really being discussed because it really wasn't that that was being discussed. . . .

The period between Dr. Armstrong's formal departure and the assumption of office by Dr. Newberry was approximately six months. It was preceded by a period of ambiguity that lasted for 18 months during the Association's restructuring. A staff member recalled that: "It [was] an increasingly ambiguous time." Part of the ambiguity came from a decision of the Acting Executive Director who felt that his duty was to maintain the operations of the Association while ensuring maximum flexibility for the new Executive Director. He observed:

> I took the view that I was a caretaker and that I wasn't going to change any substantive thing about the organization. I wasn't going to replace anybody that left. That would be the task of the new Executive Director. A few people left

> and we were down to a skeleton crew which was good in a sense that it gave Alan an option to put some of his own stamp on the organization when he came in. It meant that burnout was the order of the day and I didn't recognize that I was burned out towards the end of it. I was clearly burned out trying to do too much.

The interregnum period also had a significant impact on trustee confidence in the Association and its ability to respond to the organizational uncertainty created during the restructuring. That uncertainty and the need to rebuild trustee confidence were significant challenges that would face the next Executive Director.

The Search for a New Executive Director Begins

With the clearly articulated profile of an ideal candidate the Tanton/Mitchell Group began an Executive Search to identify potential candidates for the board's consideration.

After an intensive search, short listing, and interview process a new Executive Director was identified by the Board of Directors. He was Dr. Alan Newberry.

Dr. Newberry: the candidate

At the time Dr. Newberry was approached, he was serving as Superintendent and CEO of the largest school board in the Province of Alberta, the Calgary Public School Board. Previously, he had served as superintendent in a number of British Columbia jurisdictions.

He began his superintendent's career as a provincially appointed superintendent

for the Fort Nelson School District in northern British Columbia immediately after completing his doctorate in Education. While in the superintendency he also served as Official Trustee (OT) for the Stikine, a remote wilderness area in Northwestern British Columbia.

A values issue. Dr. Newberry tells the story about his first superintendency and his need to deal with a values issue:

> . . . we had a problem: We had a chair of the board who was a medical doctor, a long time resident of the community, who was committed to academic success.
>
> He believed that the purpose of Fort Nelson Secondary, graduating about forty students a year, was to prepare those students for university and specifically the University of Alberta.
>
> In fact out of the graduation class of forty about four went to university and out of those four, maybe one was successful, for a whole range of factors we could understand.
>
> He comes on the board and we are in the process of building a capital approved project, an addition to the Fort Nelson Secondary School - - an industrial education workshop and expansion of the gym. He says to me: "Alan, the important thing is to get academic courses into the high school."
>
> Specifically he focused around Physics 12.
>
> I said: "Only three students want to take Physics 12."
>
> . . . I remember the day he said: Go out and get a teacher to teach those three students.
>
> I said: "Where is the balance here?" "You know our resources."
>
> He said: "Alan, when I was a boy my father taught me how to use a hammer and I had a pair of running shoes. We don't need a new gym and a new industrial education workshop."
>
> Think what those words did to the system, on the eve of the project to build an industrial education workshop. My intuition at the time told me "We've got to deal with this". In words I use now [I meant] at a value level. In those days, I said, on a philosophical level.
>
> So I got the board together and developed a philosophy statement for the system. In the statement are the words something like this: "Any program that is introduced will be viewed as a quality program and will be resourced

> accordingly." That was a value statement.
>
> What effect did it have? It had an effect on . . . the board chair. He now publicly supported not only Physics 12 but the gym and workshop because he bought the notion that if we are going to do it, we do it well. We don't go around bad mouthing programs or devaluing the amount of academic programs. He really did buy that.
>
> Now you say:"Was he a changed person?" Not really. In his soul he still believed that academic is where the world was. But in terms of his behaviour, and that's all we were trying to do, he changed. We weren't trying to change him.
>
> That's the first time in my career where I saw the power of a philosophy statement of values. We were on the verge of a big problem in the community, the misuse of resources and devaluing virtually 98% of our graduates. How did we change? We changed it by dealing with the value question.

Dr. Newberry's intuitive understandings of the global implications, his ability to read the situation, the response to a minority position, and the district's ability to meet the foundational values of public education are important in understanding his approach to the Executive Director's role at the BCSTA some years later.

While the language has changed the fundamental understanding remained the same. Dr. Newberry recognized the need to deal with the principles, the strategic issues, rather than simply responding to the immediate needs or wants of an individual or group, the hygiene needs. He intuitively understood the implications for all students and moved to ensure that the decisions made were in the best interests of those concerned. The importance of process and of organizational goodness, begun intuitively in the Fort Nelson story continued to develop as an important strategic principle for Dr. Newberry in subsequent administrative decisions.

Upon assuming the role of CEO for the Calgary Board Dr. Newberry

recognized a cultural practice that led away from empowerment and appropriate process. He relates the story:

> . . . when I first arrived there . . . a lot of people would come to me or they'd send memos for me to make decisions about stuff. And I would say: "Why am I being asked to approve this or comment on this?"
>
> That was part of the culture, to take it to the top. . . . I started making speeches to staff, to help them understand the shift. I said: "I will help you. I will mentor you. I will work with you. I will problem solve with you . . . if that is what you want. There will be times when we need to do that. I'm not here to do your work."

Dr. Newberry continued by observing that the expectation was not one that was unique to the Calgary board but rather one that he viewed as a malady of many organizations where people look to the leader to do their work. That belief was carried with him to the BCSTA when he joined the Association in the Spring of 1990 six months after Dr. Armstrong's departure.

Summary

The chapter opens with a brief review of the perceived need to once again reorganize the governance and administration of the Association. It recognizes the importance of Dr. Armstrong's ability to read situations and people and speculates on his ability or desire to adjust to changing political and economic realities.

The second part of the chapter reviews the story of a parent and her involvement with education from her beginnings as a kindergarten helper, to school trustees, board chairperson, BCSTA committee member, director, and president. It reviews the importance of process and values in the trustees' decision making.

The chapter closes with the introduction of the Tanton/Mitchell report in 1989 and the identification of the characteristics of an ideal candidate to fill the position of Executive Director under a new governance structure.

CHAPTER 7

DR. NEWBERRY

Introduction

The chapter opens with Dr. Newberry's first day as the Executive Director. It reviews his short- and long-term goals and introduces Dr. Newberry's understanding of Dr. Armstrong's influences on the Association. It continues with the introduction of the strategic planning process that Dr. Newberry brought to the Association. The second part of the chapter compares the leadership of Dr. Armstrong and Dr. Newberry.

Transitional Leadership

The First Day

> . . . when he first met with us he asked everybody around the room what he should know; things he should know. I told him he should know that he was dealing with high calibre staff people who deserved his respect and that he should provide that to them.

The director's comments to Dr. Newberry reveal something of the staff's uneasiness after two years of ambiguity and change. Dr. Newberry was aware of the Association's recent history and responded to the need. He presented his understanding of the Association's proud history and his plans for the future. The first few days were important in establishing the trust and respect of staff. While he was aware of the long-term need for strategic planning to become part of the organization's culture he recognized the organizational hygiene issues that required attention in the near future.

He characterized the immediate issues as "tactical decisions" while the longer term ongoing issues were viewed as "strategic decisions" (Bolman and Deal, 1990). Dr. Newberry recognized the importance of organizational history in his responses to both tactical and strategic decisions within the organizational context. To that end he paid tribute to the considerable accomplishments of the previous Executive Director and his staff.

One director commented that in those first days: "Alan brought a sense of calmness to the place."

Tactical Decisions

A Respect for Association History

Earlier experiences had affirmed his understanding of organizational process and the need to proceed with both caution and purpose. Dr. Newberry summarized his understanding of the situation as he joined the Association:

> The mandate I was given was to look at the organization and create a new order if that was appropriate [while remembering] . . . there was a respect for the history of the organization.
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> They were a successful organization with a proud history and yet this need for change.

Dr. Armstrong

Dr. Newberry acknowledged Dr. Armstrong's accomplishments:"He took it [the Association] from nowhere and built it into probably the strongest school trustee organization in the country." Dr. Newberry knew that the former Executive Director

would not have been a supporter "in any way of my appointment. He would have seen me as someone very different, [with a] different agenda."

Dr. Newberry related his understanding of previous accomplishments:

> When Henry came the organization was small and defined. It was an office with a secretary . . . . [They were] attempting to arrange meetings. It had a high value on the organization of meetings to bring people together from time to time.
>
> Henry took that and he built a strong budget, a large staff, and it really helped to build the organization in the area of advocacy for government particularly, training programs for trustees. . . . He diversified and got into more and more things like the World Congress.

Dr. Newberry understood the political price that Dr. Armstrong paid when the World Congress lost approximately a quarter of a million dollars according to some observers. Some respondents suggested that Dr. Armstrong had stopped responding to the changing political climate as well as necessary in the turbulent environment of British Columbia politics. An observer said:

> . . . there were efforts at diversification at the same time that the climate was becoming very political, quite different. Quite adversarial.
>
> The government was becoming adversarial in its relationship with the people generally. We had the restraint program.

Dr. Armstrong's failure to heed the changing environment led to a confrontational approach in the Association's dealings with the Provincial Government. The organization had grown strong under Armstrong's leadership and was able to win some of the early battles with government. Later battles were less successful and ultimately were much more "noisy" than successful in achieving goals according to some Association members and educational observers.

Changing Trustees

While the Provincial government was modifying its approach in response to economic and political pressures a change also occurred in the trustees.

Storey (1993) writes: "There were important changes during the study period [1973-1990] in both gender profile and the occupational mix of the trustees on British Columbia school boards" (p. 3). Another respondent affirmed the report's findings and added additional comments on the change in trustees: "Trustees were changing. They were more willing . . . better. They were coming from more community activist backgrounds and they tend[ed] to be more educated."

As a result of the changes trustees had started to rethink the policy /administration question and were more prepared to assert their rights and responsibilities to be governors. The view has continued. Trustees according to one observer:

> . . . see themselves as governors of the system. Superintendents are losing some power. There is not the willingness [on the part of trustees] to turn over [power] to the Provincial Association, without very careful examination and guidance and monitoring. . . .

The Approaches to Change

While Dr. Newberry's long-term goal was the establishment of a strategic plan, which would become part of the culture of the organization, his short-term goals were directed towards the needed healing processes after a period of ambiguity and turmoil. He addressed that need in a variety of ways including: weekly

staff meetings, debriefings, high visibility and recognition of staff, social gatherings, and role modelling.

Dr. Newberry simultaneously recognized the very substantial challenge he faced in regaining trustee confidence in the Association. So while he attended to staff needs he also devoted considerable time and attention to the restoration of trustee confidence and support for the Association. This work was made all the more difficult because of the changing political and economic realities facing British Columbia school boards and the Association's need to have Dr. Newberry substantially reduce the Association's budget while attending to the additional needs that had been created. Those difficulties combined to stretch the abilities of staff, and particularly the Executive Director, to cope over the first months in office. These were extremely difficult and challenging times for the Association and required the strength of leadership that the Tanton/Mitchell report had identified in its search strategy.

Building Rapport and Communication

Among the first initiatives was the establishment of regular senior staff meetings. Initially, some staff saw a staff meeting as a waste of time:

> When it began . . . I think we all thought it was a waste of time and sometimes we still do. But, staff meetings have become an avenue and a venue for bringing out things that [are], basically, in the interests of the office.

Most staff subsequently agreed with the director who observed: "I think Dr. Newberry was very smart to start them. They have become a very important tool."

While senior staff meetings proved successful with directors there was a feeling that some support staff were uncomfortable: "After we had been doing that [senior staff meetings] for about a year it became pretty clear that the support staff weren't very happy. They didn't think they were part of the loop."

The need to empower the support staff was recognized as an important part of the change process and a decision was made to establish a group debriefing meeting for support staff after each senior staff meeting. The debriefings allowed support staff to receive information and provide additional insights and recommendations. While the initiative alone could not solve all of the frustrations it did go "a long way" towards a more complete staff empowerment. One support staff member said:

> these debriefings help me tremendously because I am dealing with many people out in the field and its empowering me because I understand now what is going on, I can speak more knowledgably about it.

Social changes were also occurring: "organizing office lunches, where everybody brings something . . . they are very informal . . . a common ground [is created] and people really appreciate" the opportunity. The lunches combined with the frequent celebrations of birthdays, anniversaries (work and marriage), and other personal announcements helped to sustain a sense of community among the Association staff.

Dr. Newberry's approach to staff/trustee communications was substantially different from earlier organizational approaches. Previous approaches made it clear to staff that direct trustee contact without the prior approval of the Executive Director

was unwise and could result in the loss of a job with the Association should the Executive Director view the contact as "crossing the line." Under Dr. Newberry's leadership trustees and staff communicated directly with one another. Dr. Newberry's response to a trustee's inquiry about a program was typical of his administration:

> A trustee at a board meeting might say to me at the end of the education program: "How are you doing with question x"? I'll say: "I really have no idea, because . . . [the Director] and the Education Committee are doing that."

Dr. Newberry encouraged trustees to ask questions directly of the committee members and the staff.

The approach to the Executive Director's report at the AGM was also different. Dr. Newberry used staff accomplishments to shape the report to the Association. He also recognized and introduced staff members individually to trustees at the AGM. Staff members said they were more comfortable working with trustees under the Newberry approach.

A story that was frequently told involved Dr. Newberry's response to a minor staffing problem. At the BCSTA, the roles of receptionist and switchboard operator were combined in one position. That staff member was responsible for the reception area at the main entrance to Association headquarters. Problems arose when the receptionist was called away from her station at the same time as other support staff. During debriefings, the receptionist remained at her station and missed staff activities. This was seen as inappropriate and disrespectful by senior and support staff.

The issue was brought to a staff meeting. It was agreed that the fairest solution

would to be cover the area with remaining available staff or through the rotation of staff. The staff members affected would be almost exclusively senior staff. A short training period was required to operate the switchboard effectively. Senior staff members needed training from the junior support staff member. The first volunteer and trainee was the Executive Director, Dr. Newberry. The message was clear to staff as the Executive Director "walked the talk" and staffed the switchboard during a lunch hour.

Strategic Decisions

Organizational glue

One of the primary tasks that Dr. Newberry recognized when he assumed the leadership of the BCSTA was to ensure that the lessons he learned in Fort Nelson and Calgary about common values were carried forward in his work with the Association. He spoke about the importance of organizational values and their role as the "glue" that binds people within an organizational structure. He compared the Association needs to the needs he recognized earlier in his Calgary experiences:

> . . . you have to start at the district level. We are a district, for better or for worse, someone has determined that. We could define ourselves in another way. We could say that we are a series of interconnected schools; we could use models that have been used in Chicago and elsewhere and make that kind of definition.
>
> I think the district needs to establish its vision, needs to put out some direction of those. Otherwise you don't have a district, all you have is a administrative unit of convenience.

Dr. Newberry said that the view of school districts as simply "administrative

unit[s] of convenience" was common in government today. He spoke of a provincial government and observed: "They see them [school districts] as nothing else [administrative units of convenience] rather than viewing them as the maintainers and developers of culture."

Dr. Newberry outlined the process of developing a common vision, an organization held together by its values:

> So the district needs to involve all the employees, not just principals, but all employees in the system, teaching, non-teaching. It needs to involve the parents, the community, and to the degree that it can students. The district needs to define a vision for itself.
>
> Having defined the vision you defined the type [of organization that you will be]. Now the district can say to the schools these are the non-negotiables. This is our mission. This is our value system. This is our purpose. These are the directions we are going to go in the next three or five years.

Those understandings of organizational glue were to play an important role in the development of the BCSTA Strategic Plan.

The strategic plan

The beginning point. An important part of the renewal process was contained in Dr. Newberry's mandate to develop a strategic plan for the Association. That initiative required time. The previous Executive Director's view of strategic planning as "nonsense" characterized the belief of several long term staff members. Those beliefs were part of the culture of the Association.

Trustees, by and large, were unaware of the process of strategic planning and, initially, were often reluctant to become party to the process. During his first two

years, 1990-92, Dr. Newberry moved to change those feelings and beliefs. The changes required a cultural shift.

The plan begins. Over the next two years the plan was "everywhere, every branch meeting, every PC, it was at the staff meeting, at the Board of Directors Retreat, it was everywhere." When the participant was asked how that occurred the response was: "Alan. That is how it occurred." When asked about the process the staff member replied that strategic planning was "his baby, that was his thing. He came in describing what it was, what it included, why he wanted it, how he would be doing it, and we did it." When asked about the discussions regarding strategic planning the participant replied: "We discussed, we did strategic planning, we did not discuss whether we would do strategic planning or the components of strategic planning, we did it."

The outline of the strategic plan. Specific details of the BCSTA Strategic Plan can be found in: Newberry (1992), B.C. School Trustees Association: Strategic plan (April, 1992), Report on 1992-93 strategic plan evaluation & member services survey (no date) and Strategic planning 1991-92 (no date). A summary of the plan's foundational principles is presented below.

Methodology: The methodological approach is taken from the 1991-1992 in-house strategic planning document produced for the Board/Staff Retreat at Cowichan Bay,

B.C. on July 12-14, 1991.

> The plan begins with purpose, values and mission, sets out the long- and short-term strategic directions, and presents analysis of and data on the significant issues, and the environment in which they must be faced. From these identified directions and issues an organization of means and strategies is constructed, including time lines and indicators of progress. The processes for feedback, review and change, together with the roles and responsibilities assigned, complete the plan. (p. 1)

Process: The process used by the Association is outlined in the briefing notes from the retreat:

> The Provincial Council, Board of Directors, branches and communities have taken part in what will be a two year process. The membership of the Association, through these components, has had significant input to the process. Data have been collected, analyzed and debated. . . . Environmental scans have been performed, summarized and set out for debate. The next step in the model is to bring this interim direction and collected data into a cohesive plan that sets the long-term directions, and establishes the processes to monitor and change the direction for the Association. (p. 1)

Purpose: The purpose of the strategic plan is clearly identified in the same document: "The concentration on the plan itself is designed to enable more effective direction of the organization" (p 1). It was not the purpose of the plan to present the "processes and time lines for arriving at these elements . . . . For example, the values statement was debated by the Board of Directors on a number of occasions, but the plan presents only the value statement. This statement must be understood clearly and widely to achieve effect" (p. 1).

Outcome: The notes clearly outlined the expected outcome of the two year long process: "The strategic plan will enable BCSTA to be clear in its mission --and accountable in its operation. The plan will encompass broad membership input. Value

for investment on the part of members will be paramount" (p. 1).

The briefing notes then outlined the approaches that were employed during the first 18 months of Dr. Newberry's leadership. They included:

Long- and Short-term Strategic Directions: In the filters of analysis approach to strategic planning, strategic directions are frequently viewed as being of two kinds. Long-term directions change infrequently and are used for direction-setting and expression of the mission and purpose. Short-term directions change somewhat each year and are used to direct the operational plans and strategies such as budget and advocacy. (p. 3)

Strategic Scans: Strategic scans provide information about context and issues. They seek to identify the major issues and trends in society and education that are relevant to school boards, and to describe the major attributes of the society, such as demography and job profiles, in which these issues and trends are set.

> They are not models to predict the future . . . .
> Instead, they are designed to inform so that decision-makers may influence and shape the future. The BCSTA strategic planning process is guided by data collected from the membership of the Association, and from literature with both an education focus and a global perspective. (p.6)

Organizational Analysis of Means and Strategies: Organizing and implementing long- and short-term strategic directions requires "an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)" (p. 31).

Filters of Analysis: In an earlier article, "Filter of analysis: Bringing meaning to

strategic planning" Dr. Newberry explained how "applying four "filters" during problem solving and strategic planning will achieve greater consistency between policy and operations" (p. 42). He noted:

> The Filters of Analysis approach is based on four major problem-solving filters.
>
> The intent of this model is to take a question which needs an answer, a problem that requires a resolution or solution, or an issue that needs definition or direction, and proceed in a problem-solving mode through a sequence of filters so that leadership activity is appropriate to the situation and consistent with the culture of the organization. (BCSTA Strategic Plan, April 1992. pp. 42-43)

Dr. Newberry then identified the four filters:

1. "The first filter is the purpose of the organization. This has to do with the answer to the question 'What is our knitting?' 'What is our focus'" (p. 43)?

2. The second filter is formed by the corporate leadership values. "These state what the organization believes to be important; they are the 'soul' of the system. These enable an organization to approach problems consistently, because the core leadership values are published" (p. 43).

3. The third filter is the organization's mission. He defined the mission as the organization's purpose, noting: "One cannot engage in strategic planning without clarifying the relationship between the mission and the question, problem, or issue to be dealt with. Any organization in search of unity needs a mission" (p. 44).

4. The fourth filter is the organization's vision. "Vision has to do with our preferred future, or destination . . . . Visions are the beginnings of the global picture

from which operational plans, goals, and objectives will be formed" (p. 46).

The results after two years

The strategic plan was now part of the organization's description of how it defined itself and set its short- and long-term goals. In spite of its powerful influence and the charismatic presence of the Executive Director some constituents privately continued to express reservations about the process and the product. This qualified acceptance was not presented as rejection or disengagement but rather as critical thought about the process and its life within the organizational culture when it was separated from the personality of the Executive Director. A staff member, who expressed personal reservations also recognized: "Alan won't let the plan become a doctrinaire straight jacket. . . . In other words he won't let it become what it shouldn't be . . . a gaol for the policy makers and decision makers. . . ."

The Executive Director also recognized constituents' reservations. Strategic planning "takes constant work on the part of the leadership" he said. Work that he was willing, indeed anxious, to do because of his passionate belief in the benefits of strategic planning for organizations.

It is important to recognize the constraints imposed by the transitional nature of Dr. Newberry's leadership and the influences of many years under Dr. Armstrong's leadership (Vaill, 1984).

Comparing Leaders

As staff and trustees taught me about their Association, their culture, and the democratic process, they introduced into many of these conversations the differences between Dr. Armstrong and Dr. Newberry. Almost every director and trustee spoke of the differences. At the time of begining my data collection, Dr. Armstrong has been preparing for and completing his departure for almost five years while Dr. Newberry had been the Executive Director for less than three years. The issues of organizational change, the ownership of culture, and anxiety about future change were not yet fully resolved for staff members.

The Change Process

The influences

The influences of Dr. Armstrong were still very much a part of the culture of the Association. While there was no attempt to diminish the effectiveness of Armstrong's vision there had been a substantial refocussing and restructuring of the Association. Process and strategic planning had taken an increasingly important place in organizational discussions and decisions.

Dr. Newberry had brought "a calmness to the Association." His preferred cultural changes had not yet been fully realized but the staff and Association had realized the value of the analysis of strategic and tactical decisions.

Dr. Armstrong

It is recognized that Dr. Armstrong took the Association from a small non-professional service organization (London, 1985) to a professional bureaucracy (Bolman & Deal, 1990). The processes involved in that change and the implications of the changes have not been formally examined by the Association.

The early stories of Dr. Armstrong created the impression of a sergeant who had just been given a group of new recruits. The recruits have little knowledge of the culture, the tasks, the possibilities that lie ahead. The sergeant makes huge demands. Some drop out while others remain and continue to improve their performance and are eventually accepted into the new organizational community. While the sergeant is frequently the focus of anger and frustration he also serves the very useful purpose of allowing the group to become a team that quickly learns the values of the organization and the limits of behaviour (Vaill, 1984).

The differences

Armstrong's task was substantially different from Newberry's and the approaches reflect those contextual differences. Dr. Armstrong had to create a culture. Dr. Newberry had to change a culture by saving the best of Armstrong's legacy while ensuring the mandate to change, to plan strategically, was met in a way that was consistent with the organizational values.

That difference was recognized by staff. One staff member observed: "We are

a different kind of organization under Alan than under Henry. I think we are no less effective. We are doing things that make a difference. But we are doing different things."

One of the changes that made a difference was the nature of the relationship between the Association and senior administrators in local school districts. Under Armstrong's leadership the Association was regarded as a "fire brigade" that was called on in a crisis to deal with policy and administrative differences at the local table. Usually by the time the Association was called its role had become damage control and the minimization of loss. That approach created some difficulties for the Association since it became, for many administrators, an organization that they associated with trouble on the local scene.

Dr. Newberry changed the focus of local level involvement to a service that was to be educative and resource oriented. It became more collegial and less directive, certainly much less directive than it had been in the difficult bargaining of the 1970s. Local board services became sessions in strategic planning and value issues rather than superintendent dismissal. This approach was a consistent one for the Association.

A primary example of that difference may be in the approach to legal services within the BCSTA. The Director of Legal Services spoke about her job as being one of general advice and referral rather than being engaged as counsel for a board in a local dispute as would be the case in Alberta and other jurisdictions. That understanding of the role as educative rather than confrontational or combative is

reflected in the strategic plan and culture of the Association. It is a change that was well received by both trustees and staff. A respondent observed: "Under Newberry the standing of the organization has never been better. We are no longer seen as a threat to administration."

A large part of the difference in the Association could be traced to a fundamental understanding about process. Dr. Armstrong felt strongly about his principles and did not hesitate to impose, if necessary, those principles on others. Dr. Newberry had a very different understanding of the development of principles. "Alan believes in democratic debate about what the principles should be whereas Henry had discovered them," according to a long time staff member. Those fundamentally different understandings led to substantially different approaches.

In Dr. Newberry's view, according to a staff member, if the principles are wrong then "you present the best possible arguments to the Board and then serve as a good and faithful servant." To do any less than that is to "deny democracy and become part of the problem." That understanding stands in sharp contrast to Dr. Armstrong's understanding and behaviour as was exemplified in the Noyes case, discussed earlier.

Seminars change

Another difference that permeated the Association was the difference in the approach to seminars. A director observed: "Seminars with a political agenda were

common under Henry but are rare under Alan." The difference between education seminars under Dr. Armstrong and those designed under Dr. Newberry were characterized by a respondent in the following manner:

> Alan has changed the focus of the seminars a little bit but maintained the quality. Henry's seminars were sharp and part of a let's get it done view of things whereas Alan's have shifted from that to education. Seminars should not be contaminated by other agendas. They should be education agendas and what we hear is to catalyze thought, ideas, and discussion and bring the new questions to bear. So they are much less politicized than they were under Henry but I would say that is probably an advantage. It is certainly correct. It is what education programs should be in my view. . . . Politics have to enter some of the seminars but that is kept to an absolute minimum.

The political approach of Dr. Armstrong created competing groups and power politics whereas seminars under Dr. Newberry's leadership were more about learning and education. The tone was cooperative.

The fundamental view of the purpose of committees was to change under Dr. Newberry. Dr. Armstrong felt strongly that the important part of the committee process was to ensure you got the "right" outcome. A staff member observed:

> This was Henry's view of committees. Committees never did anything in their lives. Committees have two functions. To decide what to do and to judge whether that's been done well. If you want anything to sing out get somebody to go away and do it herself and have the committee judge whether it sings.

The respondent continued by observing that there was a third thing. "They can decide who should do it. That's it. If you try to get committees to do it, it is a disaster."

Policy and administration differences

The approach taken by the Executive Directors was markedly different in the area of Policy and Administration. The line was a well defined line for Dr. Armstrong and one that staff crossed "at their peril." Several staff respondents spoke of people "disappearing" from the organization after they had been perceived to have crossed the line. Under Dr. Newberry there is a much "softer and more open" line. Staff respect the line as a way of defining the appropriateness of an action rather than viewing it as something to be feared or avoided.

Personal styles

The personal styles of the Executive Directors created a difference in how they were to approach outside constituents. That difference was most clearly illustrated in their dealings with senior government. A staff member observed: "Henry was fireworks whereas Alan is willing to listen to his people whether they be trustees or staff. I think he [Dr. Newberry] thinks about it [disagreements with government] a bit more logically."

Representative to participatory democracy

One factor that was to influence the role of the Executive Director was the change in the organizational structure that occurred at the time of the review process. The change away from representative democracy, through a small representative group

from the branches around the province to the Provincial Council (PC) and constituent or participatory democracy changed the locus of control to the elected representatives and away from the Executive and the Executive Director. While the move to Provincial Council was reactive in its origin the implementation and refinement of the Council has been proactive and positive. The distrust and sense that "Henry has stolen all the power" was replaced with a sense of cooperation and mutual respect as Provincial Council established a working relationship not only with the Executive Director but the seven staff service area directors.

Interim leadership

While the change had not been an easy one for some staff members there was an appreciation by the Associate Executive Director for how well people worked during the ambiguous time under an interim director and the Association's efforts to provide a "fit" for Dr. Newberry. The Associate observed that "it was a difficult time with people under considerable stress with the loss of Henry." He said: "This was a time when often the worst qualities of people come out. Nobody did that. Nobody undermined me at all. So I had a lot of respect over the short period."

The challenges of transition

The transitional period was a difficult one. Dr. Newberry began his tenure with the Association during a time of staff and trustee uncertainty. Trustees had not yet

seen the results of the decision to restructure and so some remained tentative in their support for the Association. Staff, similarly were apprehensive about the new leadership and their ability to fit into a changing vision for the Association. With these substantial challenges facing the Association on both the governance and administrative sides it was remarkable how far the Association came in the short period under Dr. Newberry's leadership. While the transition was not complete there was a sense of the need to refine rather than re-invent the organization at the time of the research. A director observed:

> I think we are a pretty healthy vibrant organization. The organization is 'infinitely' healthier than it was five years ago. What is needed now is a willingness to listen, to give direction and take leadership. We can do that.

Chapter 8 deals with the development of culture in the contemporary Association under Dr. Newberry's leadership.

Summary

Chapter seven examines the transitional period from the departure of Dr. Armstrong through to the appointment of Dr. Newberry and the introduction of change processes, both tactical and strategic. The chapter closes with the recognition of the considerable leadership challenges faced by the new Executive Director and the considerable progress that had occurred as the Association moved towards the completion of the transitional period with the Association ready to fully concentrate on the contemporary issues facing it.

CHAPTER 8

THE CONTEMPORARY ASSOCIATION

Introduction

This chapter presents some of the "corporate leadership values" (Newberry, 1992) of the Association as it worked towards closure of the transitional issues of the previous three years. Dr. Newberry's strategic planning processes were established, the initial mandate of the Executive Director from the board had been completed, and the Association was responding to a rapidly changing political and economic climate.

The Culture of the BCSTA

Introduction

Culture includes a plethora of attitudes, behaviours, and expectations. Because it is dynamic and complex it resists attempts to categorize or freeze it to facilitate easy analysis. This section will deal with cultural issues first in the wide ranging responses of participants and secondly the particular responses that focussed on attributes that members identified within their understandings of culture.

As one staff member observed:

> If you ask what are the elements of the culture of the BCSTA that make it effective, that have endured, I would say that it is the focus on . . . intellect and that what is most important is that there is a competition of ideas and those ideas transcend the usual bureaucratic and self interest issues . . . .

Within the discussion of culture there are several subtopics that are dealt with individually although not separately. The first observations focus on culture specific observations by staff, trustees, and knowledgable outsiders. The succeeding sections focus on the various values and processes that have a direct relationship to culture. The subtopics are: values, empowerment, process, and staff.

Cultural Influences on the Association

There was widespread agreement that "Henry built the culture, staffed it and put in the [seminal] ideas. Alan has preserved and enhanced that culture." A number of staff comments were reiterated throughout both the internal and external respondent interviews. Those comments were seen to be the most robust since they reflected not only the espoused values and culture but the behaviours that outsiders identified as part of their definitions of the Association.

An area that was important, and somewhat unusual in a professional bureaucracy (Bolman and Deal, 1991), was the strong sense that "unlike more political organizations people find a way to work together and pursue public rather than personal interests." That sense of working together was witnessed at the AGM debates and the incident, related earlier, about the loss of an AGM vote and a trustee's response. It was identified in the "Red Book" process at several points and was evident in the stories that staff told about recognizing individual strengths and their ability to disagree with a passion for the ideas without endangering the ability to

continue the relationship. It was perhaps characterized best by the common understanding of staff that disagreeements did not continue outside the meeting. That willingness and ability to put issues aside was foundational to the culture of the organization. Staff recognized and valued that ability and when "fit" was determined it was considered essential because while the Association demanded people of high intellect, independent thinkers, and self motivators it also shared a strong belief in the value of collegiality and community. That shared understanding led to some non-conventional solutions to problems.

Contemporary problem solving

A director described a meeting held between himself, a newcomer to the Association, the Executive Director, and the Associate Executive Director. The Association had to develop a position on the question of merging, or buying out, or supporting, the Education Relations Information Society (ERIS). The question had been highly contentious for trustees. He described how the meeting unfolded:

> There was some pretty tense discussion on how I was to approach that. It was a preference of Alan and the Associate Director to engage outside consultants who would do a thorough analysis of the cost structure and the liabilities of ERIS and demonstrate that it would be a bad deal, a bad business decision.

The new junior director, took a different position, not in terms of the conclusion, but in terms of the process. He felt that "notwithstanding having consultants and the good reputation of a big name . . . that it would be perceived as 'buck passing' and that could backfire on us". He said it would not resolve the issue

because those who sought a different solution would simply look to another consultant who would provide the alternative solution.

After a lengthy debate the decision was made to follow the newcomer's preference and engage the trustees in the process of making a determination by facilitating a review of the issue with trustees.

The Director continued by observing:

> So we took it to PC and made it a major working session where we again had people in small groups. Each group was selected to ensure that it had a diversity of views represented on the preference for "in" or "out."

The groups took a look at "some of the issues. . . . 'What is involved?' 'Is it going to be a merger or some closer relationship between the two organizations?' They looked at cost, service, and so forth."

The result of the process was general agreement that while the ERIS idea was valuable it was outside the ability of the Association to support the organization.

The director concluded by saying: "So it worked out well. So it was resolved. Everybody was truly happy with that."

The new approach was important for the Association. Some months later, the Association addressed the ubiquitous question of provincial bargaining. The ERIS process and principles were applied again within the framework of the organization's strategic plan.

The process was significant because it demonstrated to a new director, and the rest of the staff, that the Executive Director's approach, in practice, aligned well with

the espoused values of the Strategic Plan. The Executive Director had "walked the talk."

In reflecting on the process the director observed:

> The issue always was: "What can we do?" "What is the best thing we can do to resolve this issue?" It was not: "Whose idea is this?" I think that is demonstrated in the junior guy gets his way.

He continued summarizing his thoughts about the process by saying:

> There is a concrete and objective example of culture in action. Principled rather than positional bargaining and I think that interest based approach is very much the way things get done . . . it is followed in bargaining or other issues. The basic concepts and values, the underlying values, are the same. I think it is great. It is the way we operate here. It is also sort of a major product line, if you will, that we try to deliver to our members.

The use of the PC to resolve the issue was in keeping with the principle of participatory democracy and the mandate of the PC. The process marked the end of a previously held view of the division between policy and administration.

The decision to engage trustees in the process was significant at the governance level since it demonstrated the effectiveness of the structural and organizational changes that had been contemplated in the development of the PC and the hiring of Dr. Newberry. Trustees saw and participated in a new way of doing business at that working session. This was clear evidence of the appropriateness and effectiveness of their earlier decisions to re-examine the governance of the Association.

Challenges to the Culture

An incident that brought the culture to the surface in the Association was an

address by the Minister of Education for the Province of British Columbia. A large number of respondents spoke of their feelings about the Minister's address to the AGM.

The Minister had been invited to address the Association in keeping with a long standing tradition. The traditions of the Association formed an important part of the organization's culture and it was expected that the Minister's address would respect those traditions. Association business combined a sense of respect, valuing, and trust. The unwritten rules of address and debate, within the formal presentations of the Association, were expected to be carried to the floor of the AGM.

The conventions of "How we do business" were readily identifiable to people familiar with trustee associations after even a short visit to the assembly. It was an expectation of the assembly that core values and the mission of the Association would be respected during any discussion.

The Association's culture found its definition in its care about education and children. There was a strongly held belief that the focus must never be ignored or forgotten in deliberations. It was expected that positional power be used sparingly and only after exploration of other alternatives that fit more closely with the fundamental values of the Association.

In no circumstances were positional rather than principled approaches to be taken in the explorations of new alternatives no matter how difficult the problem. These understandings were substantially ignored by the Minister in his address to the

AGM and the responses were immediate and predictable.

One staff member observed: "The lack of respect in the Minister's remarks to trustees, since this is an organization that prizes respect, created real anger." Another staff member observed that the Minister had "demonstrated a real lack of understanding [of the processes] of the Association." He failed to understand the culture. That lack of understanding of the culture was viewed by trustees as "a failure to respect the importance of the Association and its service to children."

A participant who said that she had voted for the Minister and his party expressed bitter disappointment in an "NDP Cabinet Minister who does not appear to be schooled in the nature of governance and democracy. At best this is counter-intuitive."

The Minister's "I'm the boss here" comment was highly offensive since it was viewed as a confrontational approach by staff and trustees. One trustee expressed concern since he felt that the Minister's statement was "not a leadership statement within the culture of the Association." Further, that such a statement was not consistent with "the understandings of trustees or staff about ourselves and our mandate."

One director complained: "All the Minister could talk about was the budget. The bottom line. He didn't talk about kids." Another director added a summational observation about the Minister's lack of understanding of the nature of trusteeship and governance. "That lack of understanding is at the heart of the Minister's difficulty in

working with the BCSTA." That there were increasing difficulties in working with the provincial government became even clearer when the government proposed that the structure of collective bargaining would be changed.

Cultural expectations

The organization's culture ensured that certain rituals and processes were followed by those who wish to develop relationships with the group. When traditions were ignored newcomers may have found it difficult to develop sustainable relationships with the Association.

Respect for the core traditions were an important part of how staff interacted in the Association. It was expected that when a person called or visited, social pleasantries would be exchanged before the business at hand was begun.

The traditions of small talk and the sharing of food also formed an important part of the culture of the BCSTA. An understanding of the need to chat but also get the job done was talked about by a university faculty member who had worked closely with the Association for several years. He said:

> My impression of the BCSTA staff is that of thorough competence. The staff is thoroughly competent and capable. They listen. They can 'read', they can sense what is going on. That is a hallmark of Henry.
>
> Staff know the social need to chat but also can produce information at the snap of your fingers.

He continued by observing: "I never felt deficiencies nor shortfalls like some other organizations. . . .".

Staff and knowledgable outsiders referred to many of the same values when they spoke about the Association and its culture. Comments ranged from: "It is inclusive," "There is respect," "We are totally respected from CEO to support staff," to observations about the importance of the social chat "in establishing acceptable communications within the culture of the Association." This was seen to be something that was understood and important. Observations were also shared by staff about the "willingness to help across departmental lines if the others ask but the culture says you don't impose your help."

It was those understandings which formed the cultural expectations that the Minister had failed to understand in his dealings with the Association. Those core cultural understandings were processes that formed the foundational values of the Association and were identified by staff during formal and informal discussions and during my observations at trustee programs and my work at headquarters. What also was evident was that others' orientations to the Association were changing. Governments anxious to reform educational structures and trustees with strong economic concerns were beginning to view the Association differently.

Values

The understanding of corporate values was fundamental to service in the BCSTA. Newberry (1992) writes:

> When we discuss values related to strategic planning we are talking about core leadership values, or those guidelines which influence a leadership

> group. . . . We are not talking about *personal* values -- we are talking about *corporate leadership* values. (p. 81) [italics in original]

Dr. Newberry continued by referring to Deal and Kennedy's (1982) discussion of values:

> *Values are the bedrock of any corporate culture.*
> *Values provide a sense of common direction for all employees and guidelines for their day-to-day behavior. . . .*
> *Since organizational values can powerfully influence what people actually do, we think that values ought to be a matter of great concern to managers.*
> *For those who hold them, shared values define the fundamental character of their organization, the attitudes that distinguishes it from all others.* (Newberry, 1992, pp. 81-82.) [italics in original]

Dr. Newberry's strong sustained determination to implement an effective strategic plan and his view of values as fundamental to organizational success were evident in the interviews with participants, the documents of the Association, and the observations of informed outsiders.

Respect

An early impression of the BCSTA was the sense of respect that was apparent in the dealings throughout the Association. Respect was apparent in the debates at the AGMs, PCs, committee meetings and in the day to day activities of the executive and support staff of the Association. The Association's strategic plan spoke to the question of values and the relationship between the staff and the elected "clients" of the Association.

The following stories were included, not because they are in anyway unusual

for the Association, but rather, because there were typical of how the Association dealt with both the big and small issues.

The collective bargaining issue

The first story was told by the newest member of the executive staff, the Director of Employee Relations. He joined the Association in the spring of 1991. Very shortly after arriving in Vancouver the director attended the AGM and told the following story:

> I came in April, and almost immediately, in May, we had the AGM and prior to and at the AGM it became very clear that one of the major issues that the organization had to deal with was this issue of provincial bargaining.

While the issue was new to the director it had been discussed almost continually since the founding of the Association in 1905. He continued his story by characterizing the issue:

> Sort of the shorthand for describing that issue which essentially was; "How should collective bargaining be conducted?" Should it continue to be conducted on an individual school district by school district basis or should there be some form of centralized bargaining?

The tone of some of the debate was inconsistent with the values of the Association's strategic plan:

> This issue had been debated with great vigour for the last two or three years and there was a lot of acrimony about. A lot of the debate had as much to do with who was saying what and how they were saying it as it was about what people were saying. There were people who were really quite upset about what they thought was manipulation by the various parties and so trust was very much an issue. [Some trustees thought] other people held the wrong views and

therefore were untrustworthy as well. . . .

At the end of the meeting after considerable "very intelligent and thoughtful debate and discussion" the majority prevailed and the "filters of analysis" (Newberry, 1992) were used to pass the core resolution which "stated that the current state of teacher board bargaining was unsatisfactory and it directed the Board of Directors to engage in discussions with the government and with the BCTF to try and change that."

Having received direction from the AGM the staff were faced with a problem not unlike the earlier ERIS difficulty. The director said:

> We thought; "How are we going to do this? What kind of principles are going to guide us?" We had to figure out why we would engage in this kind of dialogue with the government and the teachers. What would provide guidance for us? What was important for us? What was our view? What was our analysis and where did we want to go with it?

The Association staff struggled with those questions and recognized the need "to provide some guidance to the discussion." A brief was developed. Its "underlying theme was to distinguish that in any system . . . it would be useful to distinguish between structures, processes, and relationships."

Initially, "it appeared that a lot of the [participants'] debate was around: 'What's the best form of bargaining?' The participants were exchanging structural solutions. . . . we tried to inject an appreciation of the other elements, the processes and relationships."

As a result the Association staff constructed a "framework" to examine the underlying questions. They asked: "'Are there structural problems, process problems,

relations problems? . . . [We tried to] use those to diagnose some of the symptoms and turn them in directions where the solutions lay."

Association staff were aware of recent research and analysis that demonstrated with

> any structure there are examples of failure and examples of success. That is one of the pieces of data that told us that structure is probably not the answer. There is something else here. So that led us to take a more systematic approach to relationships . . . to promote interest based bargaining.
>
> As a result of that understanding the Association opened up a dialogue with the BCTF to take a look at the relationship on a provincial basis. [We had] meetings with them and those culminated in a rather modest list of areas where the two associations could cooperate and continue to build a relationship. [It was] probably [a] fairly realistic [list]. Certainly not enough in terms of progress . . . not enough visible . . . promise, change, to have a really significant influence on the debate for the next AGM.

The debate shifted markedly in the second year. "The government sent out an invitation to all of the stakeholders . . . which amounted to. . . . 'We're going to reform the way bargaining is done in public education. What flavour of provincial bargaining do you want?'" The Association responded by preparing a brief that outlined its view of appropriate processes, relationships, structures and analysis.

At the next AGM a resolution to support province wide bargaining as a matter of policy was passed. The Provincial government formed a "Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service and the Public Sector." It became known as the "Korbin Commission" and the mandate included an examination of "bargaining and human resource management in the public sector including the K-12 [education system]"

(BCSTA, 1993).

The development of the Redbook. The Association's response to the Korbin Commission was the development of Issues and options: An interactive approach to achieving a better bargaining system in the public education sector (1992). The handbook became known as the "Redbook." The Director of the Employee Relations observed: "So out of that came the Redbook which was . . . [how] we tried to figure out: 'How are we going to do this?' 'How are we going to deliver on this mandate?' 'How do we know what we are going to say?'" Those questions resulted in an extended debate for the Association's Board of Directors, Labour Relations Committee, and staff.

> Organizational values made it clear
>
> that there was no way we could be prescriptive. We couldn't make a decision here and then sell it. That wouldn't go . . . .
>
> The theme of local autonomy is a very strong value that is held collectively, as part of the culture, and so that to practice what we were preaching in the relationships, processes, and structures brief, it was clear that process would be very important. To demonstrate that all participants would have a fair opportunity to participate and to create something that really was good and durable.

> Part of the Redbook process was to develop
>
> a set of criteria against which to evaluate any of the examples and or any options that the users could develop. It created six criteria that reflected what they had told us in the previous surveys about what is wrong with the present system.

The Redbook defines "the principles which reflected the underlying values, the

principles, and the selection criteria." The criteria have been filtered through a systems perspective and distilled into six criteria, listed below:

> **CRITERION A:** Enrichment of the educational experience for students.
> **CRITERION B:** Sensitivity to community values and educational priorities.
> **CRITERION C:** Contribution to power-balanced and cooperative relationships.
> **CRITERION D:** Impact on cost and duration of the bargaining process.
> **CRITERION E:** Articulation of funding authority with expenditure authority.
> **CRITERION F:** Durability for promotion of long-term planning and maturation (p. 9). [bolding in original]

In a reflection on the bargaining system the Redbook authors suggest:

> Perhaps a reasonable place to begin the process of paradigm reconciliation in the public education sector would be for boards and their representatives to recognize that teachers are not mere factors of production. If they can be trusted behind closed doors with the community's children they can probably be trusted to exercise responsible discretion on matters previously the exclusive purview of scientific management. Similarly, teacher unions and their federations might wish to acknowledge that teachers are not helpless proletarians requiring the protection of bureaucratized work rules. They can be trusted to exercise creative discretion without selling out their integrity as union members. (p. 5)

One of the outcomes of the process was the brief "Focus on the Future" to the Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service and Public Sector submitted by the Association to the provincial government in February 1993. The brief made four recommendations to the Minister of Education.

The process that was recommended again reflected the organization's interest in values and principled decision making. The director said that we insisted that:

> The processes employed . . . must be consistent with the principled approach articulated in the framework so that the development and the implementation and the maintenance of the framework's structures, processes, and relationships are consistently and unconditionally principled.

That approach remained the Association's approach throughout the process.

Conflicting interests

This understanding was demonstrated in a story by the Executive Director about a staff member who crossed the line. Both the Executive Director and the staff member told me the story and while there is no agreement on the solution there is a clear understanding of what was and was not acceptable and continued mutual respect between the individuals.

The editor of The Leader, the Association's Newsletter, came to the Association as a contract employee after a brief time as the education critic for a large Vancouver daily. She also served as co-host of a local cable education program and was the president of a literacy society. Given her interests in education and her profile in the community she agreed to act as the keynote speaker for a partisan political party meeting in a Vancouver suburb. During the course of her address she said that she believed the party would be successful in the upcoming Vancouver School Board elections.

The Association, over the years, had taken a very strong stand on the non-involvement of the Association staff in the election process. The contractor's behaviour was seen by the Executive Director to violate that stand. She related the story:

> I was told that I had crossed the line in giving this speech to a provincial political organization. . . . [Since] I am very much identified with BCSTA and the Education Leader, a publication of the BCSTA, I should not give a speech to a political organization. I disagreed.

In spite of her disagreement, she talked about the respect that was involved in the process. Even though she did not agree with the decision she felt certain that she had been heard and that her arguments were understood. She talked about the processes that the Executive Director used in the discussion to ensure that the concerns were aired thoroughly and fairly. She also spoke of his willingness to put off personal plans to ensure that she was fully heard. The Executive Director missed a personal lunch appointment yet gave no indication of wanting to cut short the meeting or impatience with the process. This was one indication of the respect that was evident throughout the organization.

The Executive Director also mentioned the meeting:

> She made a speech about education, and in this speech predicted the results of the Vancouver school board election. The Vancouver school board election is run on party lines. I asked her to come and see me and I simply started a conversation by saying, that it was unacceptable.
>
> She said: "I am an independent contractor. . . . You are trying to interfere in that."
>
> We were only into the first sixty seconds of the conversation. I said to her; [names person] if you can't accept that, I want you to resign right now because it cannot occur."
>
> So there is a case where she went right up against a wall where there was no room for discussion. "If you cannot accept the fact that we have to stay out of the school board election and that notwithstanding that, you are a contract employee you were billed from BCSTA, if you cannot accept that constraint, I want you to go now. There is no room for debate."
>
> Now I say that about a person whom I have a great deal of regard for. Who is still here. So, obviously, over time we sorted this issue out. You see it doesn't mean when you are running an organization which is high on autonomy, independence, that anything goes. Or that it's all just an abdication where the leadership just throws people out and says once you are outside the values of the organization/judgement we are going to have to deal with it.

Caring

The 1992-93 year had been a very difficult time for the staff of the Association. Along with concerns about the future of the Association and job security a number of the staff had faced life threatening illnesses.

Their responses to one another, themselves, and the organization were important in understanding the values and culture of the Association.

Responding to serious illnesses

In talking to the Executive Director I soon realized how important the staff were to him. He observed:

> Chris Hodgkinson talks about organizations as being the new feudal order and what is implied in that I think is that organizations don't have a problem with those alliances. I think the organizations are as much a part of people's lives as they are a part of the organization.

Dr. Newberry continued by telling an anecdote about one of the staff who had been ill. He described how other staff provided support by visiting her hospital and sharing her work among themselves.

> They came together out of care and used it as a teaching moment and so on. We're talking here about life acted out at BCSTA, the community.

A support staff member talked about how the staff responded to the AGM during a staff member's illness:

> When. . .[names individual] was ill I think we all carried on very well. I think the company operated extremely well when she was ill. We had a PC and an AGM. . . .
>
> Alan was feeling at such a loss without . . . [her] being here . . . that

left a big cloud for a long time. Everybody worked twice as hard because we wanted to do it . . . .

Things by and large went very well. I don't think that we had any crises. There were a few little crises but they got put on the back burner until . . . [she] came back.

People have work to do. They have lots of work to do and they don't have time to sit and fret over things. . . .

The participant spoke of the importance of the staff member's influence:

> Her spell was always there. We would say: "Well, how would . . . [she] do it?" . . . her presence was always felt. It was always there. . . . She is a good listener. She is a unique person and that's a key.

The staff member acknowledged the care she received:

> they go out of their way . . . . [P]eople throughout the organization. I think you can model behaviour like that as management but if people don't have it in them it won't come out and I think there is a sense here of how we treat each other.

She had learned the importance of drawing the line. She explained:

> I talked to staff, I started to talk to staff about this.
>
> It seems to me that in the Association, because we are always so vulnerable to boards leaving, because boards are our basic financial support, that each of us believes . . . that when that phone rings we want to be the first to answer. We feel that we have to provide top notch service and really in a sense each of us is carrying the well being of the Association on our shoulders because we're a service organization.
>
> We have to begin to think about what that does to an individual and whether it is realistic or whether we are dealing with forces here that are much larger than any one person that are larger than the single Association. There are forces that are affecting education across the country.
>
> That doesn't mean to say we do bad [work], that we provide bad service, but we do have to start making some conscious choices about what services and how we organize ourselves to do them.
>
> We have become quite a departmentalized organization and I stuck my neck out a few times to do that and I think that is going to be more helpful and necessary in the future as this organization shrinks further.

Several staff members spoke of the impact of these discussions:

> [She] has done a good job of focusing people on some of these issues. The one that we have to pay the most attention to is the issue of control. That we do have control over a lot of the stressors in our lives. I think that element of control is part of what makes this a good place to work.
>
> If I am overloaded with work it is usually my fault and I can't blame somebody else so once you figure out it is your own fault you can make some efforts at controlling it.
>
> We have had several inservices on the theme of wellness and taking responsibility for your own actions. It is an important element. . . .

When the respondent was asked what the responses to illness say about the culture and values of the organization she replied:

> I would say it is an organizational imperative. I think the nature of the work is such that you don't get particularly good work out of people that are on the verge of a breakdown so. . . .

A director remarked on the Executive Director and his leadership in the area:

> Alan is always a difficult one [to talk about]. I think that Alan does a very major service by trying to keep regular hours and by scheduling. He works so many weekends. He is regularly not here on Monday.
>
> People have a perspective that you are expected to keep your work in order that you are not going to be rewarded for workaholism type hours.

Flex time. Flex time was used whenever possible throughout the organization to accommodate family needs, such as picking up children after day care or getting them off to school in the morning. Flex time was also used, where it didn't interfere with other people's ability to do their work, to accommodate "morning" and "evening" people and their preferred working hours.

Being fair. Faced with very difficult budget cuts as a result of funding and legislative changes, declining Association memberships, and the real possibility of staff

layoffs Dr. Newberry went on to describe how difficult such decisions were:

> Now we come to the question of down sizing that community. Our current budget proposal has a forty five thousand dollar staff cut in it, unidentified. If the Chilliwack school board is giving notice to withdraw - - we do not know who is going and coming until March 31 - - but if some of the boards go, and there is no compensation from either the Employers' Association, or boards coming back, we will have to cut the staff.
>
> I look at that question.
>
> How will you do that?
>
> I find it personally very difficult. I'm not sure how we would do it because there is nothing that really comes to mind. I guess our responsibility at that point would be much more pragmatic. We only have so many dollars. We can not ask people to stay here and work without salary. I would resist initiatives to restructure the work place so that we would could keep everybody here. I think ethically that impinges on people who are here in an unreasonable way. I am talking about things like four day work weeks . . . . I don't know how we are going to deal with that. That is very much a worry. It is more a worry because of the nature of our organization. Whoever it is . . . we will do it fairly.

It is to their credit that despite the challenges of severe illnesses and job uncertainty the staff continued to sustain a caring concern for each other.

Professionalism

The BCSTA was a service organization. Almost every initiative that staff committed to was focused on "trustees, our valued clients" or staff issues relating to the delivery of outstanding service.

That approach was reflected throughout the organization in the day to day and special activities of the Association. University faculty, provincial government representatives, other third sector organizational representatives, and trustees were unanimous in their agreement that the BCSTA was oriented to trustee service and that

the quality of the service is excellent. That reputation was acknowledged and valued by the staff.

The staff had pride in being employees of the Association and felt a strong sense of loyalty and dedication to the provision of exemplary service. Staff talked of having been "chosen" for employment with the Association. The stories of the hiring processes were numerous and while there had been a substantial change in the process of hiring from the early Dr. Armstrong years to the Dr. Newberry years there had not been a deviation from the principle of hiring the best person for the job. A trustee observed:

> Nobody has any rights of succession in my opinion and that is not the case in a lot of organizations. . . . The best person for the job gets the job. That is what I have said around the board table. It doesn't matter if a trustee has been on the board for 15 years if they are not the appropriate leader for the board, the best spokesperson, the one that has the most support, no way at all they ought to be in that position. And I am really strong about that. . . .

That determination to elect the best person applied equally to hiring of the best people. Trustees spoke of their determination to hire and elect the best.

When asked how they determined the "best," trustees and staff spoke of the "fit" between the organization and the person being considered. The initial questions that were asked to determine the best "fit", according to trustees and staff, inevitably referred to the values of the organization. A trustee spoke of the process:

> What is the major focus of the organization? What are the values of the organization? What are the needs of the organization? What kind of job is this and who can best do it? And who fits? There is a fit, too, because it is a people organization. Who will fit with the people that are here? That is really

important.

Sometimes that determination to hire the best person and ensure the appropriate fit resulted in extended periods of searching with speciality positions held open for a year of more. Employees spoke of the hiring process in ways that suggested a rite of passage and their pride in gaining entry into the organization.

> An incredible staff, that is the one thing this Association prides itself on above all else, the individuals, how they got through this incredible process of getting hired. We were hired with very good reasons. What we end up with is incredibly capable, very independent, usually very, very bright, very often opinionated people who are extremely capable and extremely dedicated.

The comments were reflected in other staff's, trustees', and external constituents' views of the staffing practices of the Association. Staffing was an area of considerable interest in all of the interviews.

People: A Key Factor

Staff were considered to be key to the Association's success. While the approach that Dr. Armstrong used had been replaced by a more balanced process the essential demand for excellence in staffing had not diminished. An outside respondent observed: "If you asked what the strength of the Association was I think most people would say the staff right away."

That perception proved to be a commonly held one with trustees, external constituents, and staff themselves. A staff member observed: "The crunch of your

paper could be put down in two words: The Staff."

The Hiring Process

Dr. Armstrong was commonly given credit for the quality of the staff. He, initially, chose staff that could and would work in a highly competitive, intellectual, and demanding environment. That consistent demand and his willingness to "go anywhere" to find the right person and to wait if the right person could not be found created a culture within the Association that reflected the types of values that surfaced during my observations of, and interviews with, staff of the Association.

Several staff members and trustees talked about the "revolving door syndrome" and the "yellows." While there was real concern expressed about the lack of "due process" during Dr. Armstrong's tenure there was also an understanding about the need to maintain organizational "fit" and culture. One outside respondent described the importance of competence and organizational fit as: "Henry wouldn't put up with anything less. If you didn't pull your weight, if you weren't competent, that would be the issue." That need to maintain "fit" continued to be important to the contemporary organization. Closely related to the need to ensure "fit" was the high value that staff placed on having made it through the hiring process and being accepted into the Association.

That sense of having passed the difficult hurdles that Dr. Armstrong had erected and having "survived the interview" and "round robin" gave staff a sense of

accomplishment and membership very early in their introduction to the Association. That became one of the first culture imperatives that staff recognized. Staff observed: "people that last are: self motivated, confident, eager to compete in ideas, [have] high energy, [are] caring and outcome focussed for kids." That understanding was widely shared throughout the Association. Another staff member said: "an incredible staff. The Association prides itself, above all else, on the individuals getting hired."

Once Dr. Armstrong's level of expectation had been introduced it was sustained by the culture rather than by the force of the personality that had initiated it. The internalization of the belief in the fundamental importance of staff was protected and supported by Dr. Newberry's staffing processes while a balance was found to ensure that personal needs for respect, caring, and empowerment were not lost.

Reasons for Staying

Several staff members talked about the importance of the organizational culture in accepting their positions or remaining with the Association. A new director said that the choice was substantially influenced by the chance to work for "an enlightened employer."

Participants spoke about their reasons for working for the Association: "There are two reasons, two really strong moral reasons for me . . . public education and democracy." The staff member also allowed that there were more personal reasons. Those reasons had to do with intellectual stimulation, "I get to have lunch with the

Associate Director and talk about Kilmann (1985) while another asked:"Where else can you talk about subatomic physics at lunch and also get to serve a real public good?" A senior staff member said she accepted the job because of "the intellectual challenge that would be offered" and she continued by observing that the expectation had been fulfilled by the Association.

Working Together

The question of individual differences and how people who held such strong views could work together well in an Association was discussed by several staff members. One member said it was "because we have strong common beliefs about education and governance." Another suggested it was because we "admit our weaknesses and share our strengths," while another proposed that it was the "sense of humour about self" that was critical to the success. Others said it was because "we're all in this together" or because "we are homogeneous which is not popular these days but certainly minimizes the energy/time spent on conflict." Another staff member thought that the important characteristic was not that they don't fight but rather that when they fight they "fight not only for themselves but they fight for what they believe in and one another."

While agreement was not always possible, as in the earlier story about the political party meeting, staff ensured that there was a way to continue. The culture allowed free expression of opinion, at appropriate times and in appropriate places,

while making it clear that it was the responsibility of the individual member to understand where those times and places were and were not.

Workload Pressures

A common understanding of appropriate work rates for staff within the Association had been an area of interest since Dr. Armstrong joined the Association. The question of work rates was being reviewed during the field study because of several serious illnesses that had affected staff on both a professional and personal level. Initially, work rates at the Association came from the relentless demands of Dr. Armstrong.

Staff spoke about the "work around the clock" culture that Dr. Armstrong created in the Association. "Henry appreciated the four in the morning efforts and praised people at the AGM and Executive Meetings. It felt great the first time but it was not so great when you realized that you had created an expectation." Those expectations were substantially maintained although they were much more internally driven and selective than they were under Armstrong's leadership.

The Associate Executive Director described an intensive work period that involved the development of a response to proposed government legislation that was potentially harmful to member boards:

> There was myself . . . [and two other directors] and we sat in the conference room . . . burning the midnight oil, working around the clock. . . . Alan was insistent that happen. Quite rightly because it was so important to that process. We did it. That is build into the culture. You do that. . . . Heavily, heavily

> intensive. What I call adrenaline work. No criticism, [just] acceptance. Tired and fatigued and a tremendous sense of satisfaction because we made a lot of positive changes [to legislation].
>
> So the culture expects that.
>
> The culture also expects that when you do that that you don't have to tell anyone that it is time to go home and sleep and take some days off. It expects that and you are also expected to manage the other part appropriately well. That part of the culture is just as important and just as strong.

The importance of work rates and performance were characterized in a director's comments: "We're very high power. There is a kind of J. Paul Getty attitude toward things. 'Money isn't important, it is simply how you keep score.'" The "keeping score" function was also internally driven by the culture and subcultures within the Association.

Striving to Improve

The staff in the Board Development Services area had some highly congruent ideas about what their task was, how it was appropriately evaluated and the Association's needs for future programming. The director observed: "We need to re-invent rather than just repeating our last successes." That understanding was echoed in other departmental comments that identified a "need to do better regardless of positive feedback on the present performance." The staff member said: "For our own integrity we need to do a better job and we need to understand what we mean by better."

The need to do better was balanced by an understanding that "there is a fine line between what will play and what creative people dream up." That sense of ensuring appropriateness was exemplified in the literature reviews the Association

prepared to support workshops, the development of the Redbook process, and the selection of EduServ publications.

Staff spoke of fundamental beliefs about their work in the Association and an underlying assumption that "all work is important. There are no waste time or make work projects in the Association." That sense of the importance of what was being done pervaded the behaviours and words of the staff.

Staff Strengths and Limitations

Several staff members identified their own strengths and limitations and those identifications were often iterated by other staff as an understanding of where the strengths of the organization were.

Homogeneous staffing

An area that presented some concerns for staff was the homogeneous nature of staff. A substantial majority of the staff were female and long term employees of the Association. While it was recognized that such an approach minimized the time and energy spent on conflict resolution there was a concern that "group think" could limit the breadth of discussions in important areas. Some staff expressed a feeling that sometimes the staff was a little "cliquey" or closed to outsiders and this therefore might limit its potential to grow and improve service.

In spite of the tensions that were recognized by staff there was an

overwhelming sense that "this place supports you and you support this place."

Gender equity

While the limited size of the staff and the limited turnover in upper management positions over the last 24 years made it difficult to make any defining statements in the area of gender equity within the Association a number of comments from trustees and staff alike gave the researcher the impression that gender was not, and would not be expected to be, the defining issue in the selection of an employee or elected representative, at any level within the Association. A review of trustee executive positions showed no obvious gender bias in Board of Director elections. Middle management positions, staff service area directors, are predominately female although the most recently appointed director, at the time of the fieldwork was male. During the fieldwork five of the seven middle management positions were held by female staff members. Support staff were predominately female although some positions were held by male staff members. Senior management, the Executive Director and Associate Executive Director were both male. Given the comments of a former president of the Association, I strongly believe that had the best candidate for the Executive Director's position been female then that appointment would have been made. The fundamental value in this area was "the best person [regardless of gender] for the position."

Empowerment

Staff believed they had a substantial influence and control over their work and decisions. The sense of empowerment was seen as getting "support without interference." There was a sense of the "freedom to do good work and set our own schedules."

The real freedom of empowerment for several staff was characterized by the freedom to take risks and not fear failure. One staff member observed: "I grew up believing that if you fail that is really bad. Here we have the freedom to fail and this is empowering."

The Executive Director spoke of the differences between making people responsible for something and empowering them. He compared it to his understanding of the difference between how the Calgary Board of Education approached decision making and how it was approached by the Edmonton Public Board under their long time superintendent.

Under the Edmonton system there was what was widely reported to be a decentralized decision making process with school based budgets. Under the Calgary system there was the perception of much greater central control. Dr. Newberry argued that the situations were not as they seemed. He believed that while the dollars had moved to the schools in Edmonton they had moved there with such tight restrictions as to leave the real decision making process at the Central Office level. He viewed such an approach as closely controlled and monitored and one that simply moved

responsibility to the school and did not empower the school since the school had no real discretionary choices but was largely restricted by the envelope approach to funds. In Calgary he argued, the Strategic Planning process created much greater real control for schools because they were free to develop the fundamental principles for the school's operation as long as those principles did not look away from the district principles. District principles were seen to be important since they became the "glue" that held the district together rather than it simply being a number of independent unrelated schools that just happened to be in the same city. That understanding was clearly demonstrated in the seven service areas of the Association through the staff directors and their support staff.

The earlier story, told by the newest director, about the development of a strategy for ERIS and the later development of the provincial bargaining process and decision gave "proof" to the foundational belief in empowerment. Even though the Executive Director and Associate Director preferred other options they were willing to put those preferences aside to ensure that the values of the Association, as outlined in the Strategic Plan, were followed in the decisions chosen.

Process

The value of process was widely understood throughout the Association. Donna Jones, a past president of the Association, spoke of her early understandings of the importance of process. Dr. Newberry clearly recognized the importance of process in

his early dealings with staff and his invitation for them to share their beliefs about themselves and the things he should know, in the use of debriefings to inform staff of areas of interest and concern, and in his consistent but carefully paced movement towards cultural changes within the Association. The director of Employee Relations and Support Resource Services saw the absolute necessity of an appropriate process in the development of an approach to the contentious issue of provincial bargaining. The focus on the value of process stood in sharp contrast to Armstrong's approach: "Henry was completely focussed on outcomes and had no time for process." That understanding of Dr. Armstrong's approach may be consistent with decisions in the last years of his service to the Association but some staff would argue that it was not always that way. In the early years he had, some would argue, been much more sensitive to process issues, and particularly their political implications, than he chose to be in the final years where he felt frustrated by the external financial restraints that prevented the Association, in his view, from achieving the recognition that it deserved. At least part of that frustration was the result of provincial government policy that increased local jurisdictions' financial burdens without giving them appropriate power to affect the needed relief through local initiatives.

Summary

Chapter eight reviews issues that were identified by participants as being contemporary issues for the Association. It reviews the changing culture of the

Association and the important issues of values, professionalism, staffing, empowerment and process.

Epilogue

Since the completion of the fieldwork the BCSTA has undergone, and continues to undergo, a number of significant changes. Many of the changes had their beginnings during and prior to the field work period. As Bryson (1995) writes:

> Leaders and managers . . . face difficult challenges in the years ahead. Upheaval and change surround them. Consider, for example, several events and trends of the past two decades: demographic changes, shifts in values, increased interest-group activism, the privatization of public services, tax levy limits, tax indexing, unfunded federal and state mandates, shifts in federal and state responsibilities and funding priorities, a volatile global economy, and the increased importance of the nonprofit sector. . . . While organizations typically experience long periods of relative stability, they also typically encounter periods of rapid change (Gersick, 1991; Land and Jarman, 1992; Mintzberg, 1994a, 1994b). These periods or organizational change can be exciting, but they can also be anxiety-producing -- or even terrifying. (p.3)

Bryson's description reflects the very difficult situations faced by Dr. Newberry and the Association's Board of Directors. Those same difficulties have continued to challenge the abilities of the incumbent Executive Director and his Board of Directors who have accepted the challenge to rebuild the Association after the serious threats the Association has faced from outside political and economic forces. As Bryson observes many of the events that took aim at the foundations of the Association, and other similar organizations, were outside the control of the organizations and their

memberships.

While several of the external change forces were well established during the research period the need for confidentiality made it impossible to include them in the study. Two major foci for the Association during the later part of the research period, and the years that have followed, that have demanded tremendous amounts of staff and trustee time and energy are the Employers' Association, a provincial government mandated change to the educational community which seriously upset the balance of influence within the educational community, and the ongoing discussions with the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, an autonomous and powerful teachers' association. These discussions have focussed on attempts to resolve the endemic issues surrounding collective bargaining in British Columbia education.

At the close of the field work the provincial government had mandated the establishment of a compulsory BC Public School Employers Association and named nine trustees (six from BCSTA member boards [65][5] and three from the non-member boards [10]) to the interim board of 18 governors. The Board was charged with overseeing a task that many felt could have been better handled by the already existing BCSTA.

As a result of the provincial decision several school boards were forced, for financial reasons, to serve notice of their intentions to withdraw from membership in the BCSTA. The Association faced further serious cutbacks to its budget and a re-

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[5] Source 1993-94 Trustee Handbook.

examination of staffing and program services was required to adjust to the new political and economic realities forced on the Association by external constituent decisions. While the details of those changes are not the focus of this research they must be recognized as significant stressors for the Association during the study period.

In spite of the apparently insurmountable difficulties faced by the Association some of the cultural values that Dr. Newberry established in the Association continue to serve the Association as it restructures itself to face the new challenges of the next century.

CHAPTER 9

FINDINGS, REFLECTIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The purposes of this chapter are to provide a summary of the findings from the fieldwork, discuss the findings in relation to related literature, reflect on the findings, and identify implications for practice for third sector ogranizations.

The research question, "How has the BCSTA become and how does it sustain its reputation as an outstanding service organization for trustees?", was developed in response to the experiences described in the first chapter. As an experienced administrator and third sector board member I recognize the frustrations felt by staff and trustees working in ineffective organizations. Through my fieldwork for this study I have gained insights about the differences between those organizations and the BCSTA at that time.

These findings arise from the fieldwork undertaken in 1993/94 and my reflections on that work. The reflections are informed by my background as an experienced educator and consultant who is intrigued and challenged by the people and processes of highly effective organizations.

The implications for practice are ideas that arose in response to the fieldwork that I see as useful to those who are creating or sustaining highly effective organizations.

Findings

Discussion of the Findings

The findings are discussed in relation to the study data and the relevant literature. In reviewing the stories, documents, observations, field notes, and literature a number of values, behaviours, issues, and beliefs stood out as being important in the development of the BCSTA's role as a provider of outstanding service to the school trustees in British Columbia. They are presented as a series of findings which encapsulate these characteristics.

Finding 1: Respect for individuals and fundamental organizational values was a cultural imperative for the BCSTA staff and trustees.

A fundamental practice of the Association staff and trustees was to demonstrate respect for individuals and the Association's values as identified in the Association's strategic plan. From my earliest dealings with the Association to the completion of the fieldwork portion of the research a sense of respect was evident throughout the organization. No matter how difficult the situation, no matter how divisive the issue, no matter how passionate the debate, trustees and staff maintained respect for one another and those they served.

Dr. Newberry's (1992) reference to Deal and Kennedy (1982) illustrated the importance of this finding for the Association. *"Values are the bedrock of any corporate culture . . . . Values provide a sense of common direction for all employees*

and guidelines for their day-to-day behaviour . . . ." (p. 81. Italics in the original.) The foundational value of respect was evident throughout the fieldwork.

The "lost motion" of the first AGM during my field placement, the process for the debate on provincial bargaining, staff descriptions of loud and vigourous debates that always ended "with the same respect that we went in with no matter what happened behind that door;" and the difficult discussion between the Executive Director and a contract employee regarding a political speech during an election, revealed the importance of respect within the Association.

The willingness of staff to engage in vigorous debates and fully explore issues was, in part, a response to staff's understanding that no matter how divergent the ideas were the individuals presenting the ideas were afforded respect. The freedom to debate had substantial benefits for the Association since it meant that a diversity of views was heard and considered before important decisions were reached. The respect for and by trustees on the floor of the PC, AGM, or a committee meeting ensured a full debate of issues before the assembly and supported the participatory style of democracy that the Association created during its last restructuring.

The sense of respect had a less identifiable, but important, effect on the tone of the Association. One observer described it as a sense of calmness and warmth. The feeling, for the trustee, was as real, and more important than, the goods or services that the Association had to offer her.

Respect was particularly important for the Association because of the voluntary

nature of Association membership. No one was forced to belong to, or participate in, the Association or its programs.

An organization that can establish and maintain respect in its dealings with internal and external constituents is better able to offer reliable decisions about its services and strategic decisions and maintain a positive sphere of influence than a less respectful organization. Therefore, the BCSTA's ability to maintain "respect for individuals and fundamental organizational values" was an important consideration in understanding how the Association had created its reputation as an organization that provided outstanding service to trustees.

Finding 2: There was a high degree of congruence between the formal goals of the Association and its actual goals.

The finding identifies the congruence between the formal goals and values of the Association and the observed goals and values seen throughout the fieldwork. A review of Association documents confirmed the congruence between the formal goals of the Association and its actual goals as revealed in its public and private activities. In field observations staff were sensitive to the need to not abuse the Association's goodwill by allowing informal or personal goals to interfere with the formal goals of the Association.

The high degree of congruence between organizational goals and staff behaviours may have been a result of the rigour of the initial screening processes used

during hiring which helped to ensure an appropriate fit between the individual and the Association, an outcome of the strongly held staff belief in the importance of the Association's work and trusteeship, and the sense of ownership that arose out of a belief in staff empowerment and pride in workmanship.

The staff took care to ensure that the products of the Association were the best possible and constantly monitored trustee and school district personnel levels of satisfaction with services and products. The attention to customer satisfaction provided a clear focus for Association staff. The use of open work groups ensured that the work group goals were the goals of the Association. The establishment of debriefings for staff as a scheduled part of the work week meant that any shifts in organizational goals were identified and supported by staff. The use of a flat organizational structure that empowerd area directors to manage towards outcomes rather than processes served to assist goal congruence within the Association. The PC ensured a participatory organization and minimized the risks of groups working in isolation. The avoidance of isolated groups meant that informal goals were unlikely to develop and that conflicts with existing organizational goals were avoided.

A high degree of goal congruence is an indicator of organizational effectiveness according to many authors (Barnard, 1938; Bluedorn, 1980; Cameron, 1980; Campbell, 1974; Etizioni, 1961; Georgopoulos & Tannenbaum, 1957; Mott, 1972; Yutchman & Zummuto, 1982). Goal congruence is an indicator of common purposes, effective strategic planning, and organizational harmony. The high level of

goal congruence identified in the fieldwork supports the belief that the Association provided exemplary service to trustees.

Finding 3: There was a high degree of flexibility within Association work groups with a focus on process and product rather than authority and position.

The Association's willingness and ability to form and dissolve temporary work groups served to enhance its effectiveness. The Association staff created temporary work groups to accomplish emergent organizational goals when the existing organizational structure would not meet a need. The groups were highly flexible in their composition, worked intensely for a short period of time, and were dissolved once the assigned or assumed task was complete.

Initially, the importance of the flexibility was seen to be a necessary response to organizational limits imposed by the small number of staff involved in a wide variety of demanding tasks. Further reflection revealed a more important purpose in the flexibility of work groups for the Association.

When the staff was faced with key staff illnesses during an AGM staff adapted their normal AGM assignments to ensure that the quality of the service delivered to trustees during the AGM was in keeping with historic expectations. The staff's efforts were the subject of several participant comments. The staff response, much like the ovation received at the AGM, was spontaneous and voluntary. There was no formal arrangement for the reassignment of tasks but rather tasks were assumed by the most

appropriate and capable remaining staff. Staff worked to maintain the success of the AGM not for personal recognition but rather to serve fundamental purposes: the preservation of the reputation of the Association as a source of outstanding service; and to ensure that the quality of service would allow those who were ill to continue to be proud of the Association and their colleagues. The AGM response was consistent with the values of the Association and its cultural expectations.

A second example of flexible work groups was seen in the descriptions of the Association's response to provincial government changes to bargaining legislation. The government imposed very tight time lines for responses to proposed legislation to create provincial bargaining. The use of those tight time lines left the BCSTA at a disadvantage relative to larger organizations such as the BCTF. The Association response was to bring together the most capable people within the organization, combining legal, financial, and bargaining expertise in a working group and to work very long hours to ensure that the Association was well prepared to respond to the proposed legislation. The response was consistent with the Association's culture and the type of response that Dr. Armstrong would have expected years earlier.

A third example from the fieldwork was in a participant's description of the development of a solution to the ERIS difficulty among the Executive Director, the Associate Executive Director, and the Director of Employee Relations Services. In that instance it was historically appropriate for the Executive Director to indicate his preference for the use of an outside consultant to develop recommendations for the

Association. The approach would have been in keeping with organizational practice and would have been viewed by trustees as an acceptable response. It would not, however, have answered the underlying question as to how the issue had become problematic for the Association. It would have left the process of problem solving unchanged and would not have addressed the systemic issue. The response, under Dr. Newberry's leadership, was to ensure a full discussion of underlying issues, carefully consider the arguments presented, and then respond in a way that was in the best long term interest of the Association. The willingness to accept the best ideas, regardless of the seniority of the person presenting the ideas, and the willingness to do whatever it took to ensure that the quality of the service offered trustees was the best possible was a hallmark of the Association's approach.

Bolman and Deal (1991) in reflecting on the abilities of commando units to adapt observed:

> The group's ability to redesign its structure to fit the circumstances provided the best of both worlds. Participation encouraged creativity and ownership of the battle plan. Authority and clarity of roles enabled the group to operate with speed and efficiency when executing a plan. Like all organizations, small groups must arrange people vertically and laterally to deal with the immediate task and environment. (p.101)

That same ability to adapt was seen in the Association as it responded to emergent demands. Flexible work groups with a focus of organizational service rather than personal or territorial protection were characteristic of Association service.

Finding 4: An intelligent, motivated, and experienced staff who take pride in Association work were a key component of Association effectiveness.

Staff were a vital part of the success of the Association and their importance was recognized and respected by trustees and knowledgable outsiders. There was a strong sense of pride in staff service to the Association. The intelligence and training of staff was a vital part of the organization's ability to provide exemplary service. The documented processes used to hire Dr. Newberry demonstrated the Association's ongoing commitment to find the best candidates to meet the changing needs of the Association.

The importance of staffing to the success of the BCSTA was widely recognized. Whether it was an outside observer's "thorough competence" comment or a staff member's observation that the essence of the thesis could be summarized in two words " the staff" no one I spoke to expressed any doubt that the staff were a fundamental element of the Association's success.

The importance of staff was recognized from the first days of Dr. Armstrong's leadership when he observed that the most important job a CEO could do was hire the best people. Over the seventeen years of Dr. Armstrong's leadership it can be argued that he succeeded in hiring the best people.

While some may argue that an organization should not wait for up to two years to fill a vacancy, or that it is important to promote from within even if it means selecting a less able candidate, the Association had, since the beginning of

Armstrong's leadership always supported the position expressed by a past president of the Association when she observed: "Nobody has any rights of succession in my opinion . . . . The best person gets the job." The comments were instructive of the consistent application of values by the Association regardless of personal loyalty, positional authority, or other non-performance issues.

While one may quarrel with the principle there can be little doubt about the integrity of the process. The clear understanding of the process ensured that anyone receiving an appointment or promotion within the Association was by all judgements the best possible person for the job. That understanding had wide spread implications for the Association since both internal and external constituents began their working relationships with newly appointed staff having accepted that the successful candidate was well qualified, had wide staff support, and was the most capable person to undertake the assignment.

Because of the round robin approach to staffing, an approach that was started under Dr. Armstrong and continued under Dr. Newberry, staff felt that they had a vested interest in the success of a new staff member since they had been involved in the decision to hire the candidate. Incoming staff entered the organization knowing they had the support of staff and had joined an elite group where excellence was the norm.

Since all staff had been intellectually challenged during the hiring process there was an openness to a wide range of academic, philosophical, ethical, and personal

discussions that transcended the boundaries that organizations often consciously, or unconsciously, place on the work environment.

The important characteristics of staff included: intelligence, loyalty, respect, honesty, stamina, an eagerness to serve, and a genuine appreciation for people. The Association's creation of exemplary trustee service was highly dependent on excellent staff.

Finding 5: A strong sense of organizational mission was evident in Association staff and elected trustee representatives.

There was a strong sense of organizational purpose in trustees, who had been elected to serve the Association, and in the staff. Several staff and trustee participants spoke about the importance of trusteeship and their beliefs that Association work was vitally important to education. There was "no busy, or unimportant work" at the Association.

The strong sense of purpose in staff, and those trustees who had been elected to serve the Association, was a significant factor in understanding the effectiveness of the Association. Several staff members spoke about the importance of their work and the importance of school trustees in helping to ensure that our society had the best public education system possible. Since staff believed, and demonstrated through their behaviours, that their work was important to the success of public education and that they had a strong commitment to its success the quality of Association work was self-

regulating. When the appropriateness of a product, whether it be a press release or a new workbook, was not readily apparent staff and trustees turned to peer reviews for suggestions, comments, and improvements. Numerous examples of this process were observed during the fieldwork.

The belief that each task was important; that each person was important; and that an important social purpose was being served ensured that staff and elected trustees maintained a strong sense of purposefulness in their work.

Finding 6: The Association's willingness and ability to respond to changing political and economic realities was important in ensuring its effectiveness.

The Association demonstrated a willingness and ability to make structural and staffing changes when required. The BCSTA had undergone two major restructurings in the last 25 years. Both restructurings required substantial changes in the policy/administrative relationship. The restructuring that saw the formation of a Provincial Council recognized the changing nature of trusteeship and developed organizational structures to facilitate change.

The willingness and ability to make structural and procedural changes when required was seen to be important to the Association. As Bolman and Deal (1991) write:

> . . . Miller and Friesen (1984) argue that organizations typically go for fairly long periods of time with relatively little structural change but then experience intervals of major restructuring. Organizations try to retain their existing form as long as possible in order to maintain internal consistency and to avoid

> upsetting the existing equilibrium. But, if the environment changes while the organization remains static, the structure gets more and more out of touch with the environment. (p. 95)

The appointment of Dr. Armstrong, the restructuring of the governance structure of the Association under Donna Jones, and the appointment of Dr. Newberry are three significant examples of the Association's management of change. The ability to recognize the need to change is seen as critical to ensuring organizational survival. Had the Association not appointed a strong Executive Director, such as Dr. Armstrong, it is unlikely that it could have gained a significant voice in provincial education issues during the turbulent times of his administration. On the other hand had it not responded to the changing characteristics and needs of trustees and their call for a more participatory Association it would have been less successful in the period prior to the 1993/94 fieldwork.

Some of those differences were illustrated in the differences between a seminar under Dr. Armstrong's administration and a comparable seminar under Dr. Newberry's leadership. A respondent characterized the differences in the following manner:

> Alan has changed the focus of the seminars a little bit but maintained the quality. Henry's seminars were sharp and part of a "Let's get it done" view of things whereas Alan's have shifted from that to education. Seminars should not be contaminated by other agendas. They should be education agendas and what we hear is to catalyze thought, ideas, and discussion and bring the new questions to bear. So they are much less politicized than they were under Henry but I would say that is probably an advantage.

Perhaps the most significant change in the Association occurred with the formation of Provincial Council. Provincial Council developed a new and more

participatory organizational structure than had previously been considered possible. The idea of having 90 representatives develop Association policy without the control of party discipline or balances to ensure that large jurisdictions weren't under-represented was a bold experiment. Its success was widely recognized in the Association. It is my belief that Donna Jones's leadership of an appropriate process with trustees from around the province and trustees' respect for Jones and her committee were vital to the acceptance of the new organizational structure.

In reflecting on the effectiveness of the Provincial Council it is important to understand the contextual environment of the Council. The insistence on respect for the individual and the foundational values of the Association were critical to the success of the change. In an organization where foundational values were not clearly established a Provincial Council would likely be unsuccessful. The Association's ability to change its structure was environmentally and culturally dependent.

Finding 7: The abilities of staff and Association governors to quickly and accurately read emerging issues, individuals' concerns and interests, and the ability to respond appropriately was important to the success of the organization.

The Association staff and trustees valued the ability of staff and elected representatives to read people and situations. Trustees, informed outsiders, and staff spoke of the importance of the ability to read to ensure that the Association was prepared and able to respond to a variety of internal and external challenges over an

extended period of time.

Within the Association, and with knowledgable outsiders, this topic would be recognized as the "ability to read" situations and people. The ability to "read" was recognized as a key ability for the staff of the Association. Some staff were acknowledged for their abilities to read political situations, others for their abilities to read individuals and committees to ensure that the Association responded in a timely and appropriate fashion to changing environments and circumstances. It was an Association expectation that each area Director had an ability to read emergent issues and interests within the service area and to report those changes to others in an appropriate manner. It was also an expectation of the Board of Directors that the Executive Director, or his designate, would report changing economic, political, or educational circumstances to the Board.

For third sector organizations, whose existence is dependant upon voluntary membership, the ability to read situations and individuals is vital. A review of the correlates of effectiveness adapted from Nutt and Backoff (1992) shows that of the 15 identified correlates a majority are dependant upon the organization's ability to read people and situations in an appropriate and timely manner. In third sector organizations the ability to "read" is critical given the tenuous nature of third sector funding.

Finding 8: The Association's culture was reflected in and supported by its

organizational settings.

The setting of the Association was congruent with its goals and principles. The Association headquarters and trustee meeting areas served to re-enforce the cultural expectations of the Association.

Gagliardi (1992) emphasizes the importance of the corporate landscape in understanding the culture of an organization. Artifacts are an important consideration in striving to understand, in a holistic way, the nature of organizations (Alvesson & Berg, 1992; Gagliardi, 1992; Schein, 1985).

As Alvesson and Berg (1992) and Gagliardi (1990) observe artifacts are the most concrete part of an organization's culture and yet surprisingly little research has been conducted on the interaction between an organization's setting and the climate of the organization. An acceptance of the importance of space, as an organizational artifact, informs the reflections that follow.

Schein (1985) writes:

> Space has both a physical and a social meaning (Van Maanen, 1977). That is, for coordinated social action to occur, one must share assumptions about the meaning of the placement of physical objects in an environment, and one must also know how to orient oneself spatially in relation to other members of one's group. Placement of oneself in relation to others symbolizes social distance and membership. (p.96)

Larsen and Schultz (1992) in "Artifacts in a Bureaucratic Monastery" note that the building, its furniture, decorations, colours, and location are important considerations in understanding an organization and its culture. They continue by observing:

In the literature, artifacts in organizational settings are analyzed from different

> perspectives. One perspective concerns how artifacts are interpreted by the members of the organization (Morgan et al. 1983): are artifacts interpreted as simple or complex symbols? Are these interpretations consciously or unconsciously created by the members of the organization (Morgan et al. 1983)? Another perspective addresses the function of the artifacts within the organization: do artifacts have an energy-controlling function or a system-maintenance function for the organization (Dandridge 1983:72)? From a functionalistic point of view, Schein studies the relationship between artifacts, values, and basic assumptions within the organizational culture (Schein 1985). Finally the communicative contents of artifacts are analyzed. Artifacts are defined as cultural signals, which send messages to the members of the organization. (Daft 1983, p.282)

There were two major settings of the Association. They were, functionally, staff space (Association headquarters) and trustee space (meeting areas). The two areas were substantially separate and distinct. The setting of the Association was congruent with its goals and principles. The Association headquarters and trustee meeting areas served to re-enforce the cultural expectations of the Association.

Association headquarters reflected the values of the Association. The prominent display of students' work and the clearly visible statements of the Strategic Plan in the Executive Director's office, the small but inviting common area, the open area of the central office with its maze of shoulder high dividers, the quiet below the street setting of the building with its inviting courtyard acted to reinforce a sense of quiet respect for people and an understanding of the importance of education.

The use of rental accommodations for trustees' activities made meeting areas visibly distinct for staff and trustees. Neither staff nor trustees had any territorial claim to the common meeting area. The use of business hotels created a sense of the

importance of the business at hand and its provincial nature. The off site location also served to minimize interruptions that would have been more common had staff been more accessible to outside calls.

Finding 9: The Association staff and trustees understood the importance of process in decision making.

The importance of process in developing appropriate responses was recognized by elected representatives and staff. Participants spoke of the value of process in the decision making of the Association. The most difficult and divisive issues for the Association had been resolved through the use of appropriate process.

The understanding of the importance of appropriate process was widely shared throughout the Association. Whether it was the small activities, like the social chat at the beginning of a visit or telephone call, or the need for the involvement of all trustees in the restructuring discussions and later the Redbook process, the Association staff and trustees recognized the need to follow appropriate processes in dealing with one another and outside constituencies.

When trustees spoke about important decisions they often made references to the fairness and appropriateness of the process used to arrive at a decision. Even when the outcome was not the desired one trustees were frequently willing to support the majority decision. The process expectation became apparent, as an organizational behaviour, in the lost motion at the AGM during my field placement with the

Association. The use of appropriate process was an important consideration in some trustees' acceptance of the Association position to support provincial bargaining and the earlier acceptance of the Provincial Council governance structure.

Few participants shared an observation, story, or reflection about the Association and its effectiveness without speaking about the importance of appropriate process within the Association. A fair, transparent, and timely process was an organizational expectation of trustees and staff. Internal and external constituents' belief that appropriate processes were used in decision making was seen as an important strength of the BCSTA.

Finding 10: The empowerment of staff allowed for multiple leaderships within the Association.

Staff were empowered through the Association leadership, trustees, the Strategic Plan, and the Association's Filters of Analysis. The rationale for decision making had been clearly identified and staff were confident in their abilities to meet changing demands and circumstances without being encumbered by unnecessary hierarchical structures.

The question of organizational empowerment was closely connected to the question of organizational leadership in the BCSTA. Empowered staff were capable and willing to assume significant leadership roles in the Association. The comments in this section should be considered in conjunction with the leadership comments that

follow.

Both practitioners and academics have expressed increasing interest in the nature and use of empowerment in organizations. Philosophers, psychologists, and organizational behaviourists have reviewed the nature of empowerment and the organizational motivations for empowerment (Greenleaf, 1991; Hodgkinson, 1983; Porass & Robertson, 1992; Vogt & Murrell, 1990).

Dr. Armstrong was adamant in his insistence that everything that was done by staff was done by himself and that he would take the credit or blame for staff work with the Board of Directors. While Dr. Armstrong's involvement in the presentation of staff work resulted in a quality product and was effective in establishing the Association's reputation for excellence once the Association's culture had been changed to reflect those values peer pressure and personal pride had equally compelling influences on Association services to trustees.

Staff empowerment had increased substantially in the BCSTA under Dr. Newberry's leadership. By moving the Association away from a single point of contact with the Board of Directors Dr. Newberry had moved the BCSTA closer to Greenleaf's (1991) concept of "first among equals" in the staff's work with trustees. The strength of the approach was that the most able staff member was assigned to a task and could assume leadership for the task regardless of organizational rank or position. The approach was seen by staff as empowering.

The empowerment of staff increased the effectiveness of the Association by

allowing front line staff to speak to issues and deal with trustees' concerns with confidence and authority. The result was a flattening of the organizational structure and a more efficient use of staff time. Empowerment was a valuable organizational tool in ensuring exemplary service in the Association.

Finding 11: The formal and informal leadership choices of the Association were an important part of the Association's success.

The formal and informal leadership of the Association was well recognized by staff, trustees, and informed outsiders. Leadership styles have changed to meet changing social, political, and organizational needs.

Leadership and management were important elements in the delivery of trustee services. The Executive Director clearly had a major leadership function in the Association. His ability to develop and sustain leadership was dependent on the managerial functions of the Association being appropriately delivered. The division of the Executive Director's time between management and leadership was a reflection of organizational needs. During times of renewal, PC, AGM, illness, holidays, or political volatility there were marked shifts in the amount of time spent on leadership and management functions.

Trustees understood the policy functions of governance and focussed their work on leadership functions. Staff addressed the management needs of the Association.

Professional and support staff had different views of leadership and

management. Junior and support staff said leadership was substantially outside their influence whereas directors, and some senior support staff, viewed leadership as a collegial function.

Whether staff viewed leadership as "a collective process shared among the members" or a process "wherein one person has more influence than other members and carries out some leadership functions that cannot be shared without jeopardizing the success of the group's mission" (Yukl and Van Fleet, 1992, p. 148) the importance of leadership was unquestioned by Association staff. There was a common staff belief that leadership was founded on influence.

The literature discusses the compelling influence of leadership (Bass, 1990; Fiedler & House, 1988; Greenleaf, 1991; Hodgkinson, 1983; Hollander & Offermann, 1990; Van Fleet & Yukl, 1986a, Yukl, 1989a, 1989b cited in Yukl and Van Fleet, 1994). Some writers view leadership as coercive while others maintain that leadership is collegial. The collegial approach was the dominant approach within the Association. The shift from a highly structured to a collegial leadership resulted in a flattening of the traditional hierarchical structures within the Association.

Collegial leadership is dependent on organizational culture. The dependence presupposes the development of an appropriate vision guided by consensual values and beliefs. Consensus was developed as the result of a pressure to develop a homogeneous understanding within the organization.

Homogeneity often requires a strong visionary, or charismatic leader, who will

bring a personal vision to the organization. The leader must persistently press members to move towards the adoption of the proffered vision much as participants described Dr. Newberry's approach to strategic planning in the Association.

The views of Greenleaf (1991) have merit in understanding the role of leadership within the Association. He says his

> wish [is] that leaders will bend their efforts to serve with skill, understanding, and spirit, and that followers will be responsive only to able servants who would lead them - *but they will respond.* Discriminating and determined *servants as followers* are as important as servant leaders, and everyone, from time to time, may be in both roles. (p. 4. Italics in original.)

That distinction is an important one in understanding the relationships that had been developed under the contemporary leadership of the Association. The understanding of leader as servant contributed to both the political and administrative leadership of the Association. The understanding of the role by the CEO was critical to the success of the structural changes by the Association and was very evident in the personal interchanges between trustees, staff, and others served by the Association.

There are two important principles of leadership that find support in the stories of the Association. First, leadership must reflect the needs of the organization being served and that as organizational needs change leadership needs change. There is no one preferred leadership style suitable for all circumstances. Leadership must learn to meet the needs of all organizations in their contexts regardless of the organization's maturity, stability, or other environmental factors.

The field study revealed two types of leadership within the Association. Both

found their roots in the power to influence internal and external constituents. Influence, therefore, is seen to be a foundational measurement of leadership within the BCSTA.

It is generally accepted that the type of leadership required during the formation, or substantial restructuring, of an organization is different from the type of leadership that is needed to maintain and refine organizational cultures and initiatives. In the first leadership example (Dr. Armstrong's leadership) there was evidence of a strong need to control behaviours and to impose a personal vision on both the governance and administrative sides of the organization. Dr. Armstrong's leadership served a vital purpose (the establishment of an educational service culture) for the organization and was, substantially, responsible for the exemplary services subsequently provided by the Association. While his approach would receive limited support today from many organizational writers it remains a viable approach in some situations.

The second type of leadership is more participatory and empowering. This leadership involves the ability to work together in a collegial fashion to influence through principle and thoughtful reflection, rather than authority and position, the future of the organization (or a project within the organization). It appears slower and less efficient than the more directive style of centralized control and influence. However, while initially the process may take longer, the effects are often more durable and successful than with a more directive style of leadership.

Dr. Armstrong's influence remained strong within the Association largely because over a period of time he was able to make a number of his values the organization's values. Dr. Newberry's values appeared more compatible with the pre-existing governance values and, therefore, his influence may have been more quickly accepted since his preferred practices had gained acceptance, or in the case of strategic planning were becoming accepted, within the culture of the Association. The approach adopted by Dr. Newberry was less dependent on charisma or positional power for its continuing value to the Association than was Dr. Armstrong's approach.

Participatory leadership was found both in the formal (designated) leaders, the President and Executive Director, and the informal leaders (staff, trustee chairs, and committee members) who had established participatory leadership as a cultural principle within the Association.

Donna Jones provided the first example of participatory leadership in the formal structure of the Association. She provided servant-leadership to the Association. That service allowed the Association to review its commitments to educational service and through her inclusive participatory style enabled the Association to become a stronger and more cohesive group. That ability allowed the Association to maintain its identified foundational values in its dealings with both internal and external constituents. Once a participatory leadership was established on the governance side of the Association it was able to clearly identify the characteristics required in its Executive Director under the new governance structure.

The Association found its second formal participatory leader in Dr. Alan Newberry. Dr. Newberry brought the intelligence and educational training of Dr. Armstrong and combined it with the patience and reflection of a seasoned chief executive officer committed to participatory leadership. To paraphrase a respondent: Dr. Armstrong knew the principles and had brought them with him to the Association while Dr. Newberry was willing and able to facilitate the discovery of the principles for the Association in a collegial and collaborative approach.

The third participatory leadership role that was significant to the success of the Association and the provision of exemplary service to trustees, was rooted in the "spheres of influence" that had encouraged and supported by the formal contemporary leaders of the Association since Donna Jones's presidency. That leadership was captured in the stories of the Association. Its seminal ideas were found in:

a) the beliefs of Dr. Armstrong - hiring the best possible people

b) Ms. Jones - supporting and encouraging organizational processes that engaged trustees in collegial decision making and encouraged the development of a candidate profile that was suitable for the newly recognized needs of the Association under restructuring and PC

c) Dr. Newberry - for the strategies (strategic planning, trust, respect, and reflection) that he brought to the Association through his confidence in himself and those he had chosen to serve and lead.

Leadership is a critical element in the establishment and maintenance of an

exemplary third sector organization. Leadership in the BCSTA found its definition in the ability to influence and its durability in the consistent application of values that supported participatory leadership (servant leadership) as a core value of the organization.

Finding 12: The BCSTA staff balanced the need to serve with excellence and the need to respect and protect the individuals offering service through a process of education and reflection.

The Association staff's ability to balance the strong desire to serve trustees in an exemplary manner was balanced by an understanding of the need to respect the importance of individuals, their health, and their families.

Questions about staff health and wellness have been prominent in the lives of Association members in recent years. While the illnesses have been very serious, often life threatening and of great personal concern for all staff, there have also been benefits to the Association. Staff members have thought and talked about their own vulnerabilities and the need to manage an appropriate balance between the very strong desire to serve the Association to the very best of their abilities and their own personal responsibilities to themselves and their families. There was a belief among some staff that organizational stress had contributed to the serious illnesses. The responses to that belief were typical of the Association staff. Rather than accept the illnesses as being beyond their control, the staff pulled together and found both emotional and

intellectual support in one another. They first and foremost provided support (emotional, physical, and financial) for the staff members facing the illnesses and then looked to the situation to find solutions for themselves and those that would follow.

The foundational values of respect, trust, and honesty resulted in exceptionally strong people assuming leadership roles that typified the best of servant leadership. The responses to illness celebrated the value of human beings, not as tools of production, but as uniquely valuable individuals who existed in holistic ways. The responses combined the intellectual, emotional, and social importance of people as they provided exemplary service for others.

The tension surrounding the issues of service and wellness forced staff to re-examine the relationship between the Association and its staff. The staff's ability to provide the best service possible has been a matter of organizational pride since Dr. Armstrong assumed the role of Executive Director twenty five years ago. Staff, historically, have done "whatever it takes", without reservations, to complete a report, deliver a seminar, or prepare for a meeting. If the demands meant 24 hour work days, seven day work weeks, or any other challenge the response had been to meet the demand and ensure that a service or product that the organization could be proud of was produced. Some staff now saw the need for a greater balance between organizational needs and personal needs. The response was to follow the lead of the Executive Director and find a more balanced approach to Association service.

Finding 13: The nature of the relationship between elected school trustees and the senior government remained unclear.

The historic relationship between the Association and the provincial government was one that continued to change over time. The nature of the relationship had been substantially impacted by funding decisions at the provincial level and the increasing use of "envelope funding" to control local spending patterns.

Trustees were elected, not appointed, and there had been an expectation that the role of trusteeship was one of governance rather than an advisory function as was the case with appointed boards. However since the enabling legislation that creates school districts is provincial and the BNA Act assigns the responsibility for education to the provinces, the role of boards cannot be purely governance. Much like college boards, who are appointed by the provincial government and serve in an advisory capacity, trustees serve in an advisory rather than legislative capacity in their role with provincial government. Although trustees are elected in open elections in a process substantially the same as for municipal government their governance capacity was limited by ever more restrictive provincial legislative restraints. Changes in British Columbia legislation had altered the nature of school boards from governing bodies to advisory bodies although they continued to be elected.

The question of the role of trusteeship as a governance function was a troubling one given legislative changes. If provincial governments are determined to move away from semi-autonomous governing boards to boards with advisory

capacities then the role of school boards needs to be examined.

Canada is one of only four countries that use the school board model and recent changes in several provinces suggest that provincial governments are prepared to radically alter the function of school boards in the name of fiscal restraint. To date there has been little debate of the appropriateness of such an approach. It is my feeling that regardless of the final decision such a fundamental change should be the subject of a thorough review and that the BCSTA, and its provincial counterparts, are the appropriate forums for the debate.

Finding 14: Voluntary board membership remained an historic issue.

The issue of voluntary membership has been an important issue for the Association. It was prized as a strength and recognized as a point of economic vulnerability.

The BCSTA was a voluntary organization. Membership fees were paid by local jurisdictions directly from district revenues. Given the increased provincial government control of local board revenues, envelope funding, and the nature of many Association initiatives that allowed a "free rider" benefit to non-member boards it became increasingly difficult for the Association to maintain fiscal stability. The situation was made worse during election years when the high trustee turnover resulted in trustees being elected with no commitment to the Association or its cultural values. This difficulty was faced by the Association even when school board trustees had been

strongly committed to the Association, such as was the case when the Surrey board gave notice to discontinue Association membership only months after a Surrey trustee served as Association president. Such volatility in memberships exacerbates the increasing financial instability facing many third sector organizations as a result of changing economic and political realities for senior levels of government.

Finding 15: Third sector organizations benefit from an external S.W.O.T. process.

The use of an external review assisted the Association in the identification of complex issues and provided manageable data from diverse sources. The appointment of Dr. Newberry provided, initially, the equivalent of an external S.W.O.T. analysis for the Association. Had Dr. Newberry continued in his role as Executive Director for an extended period then the use of an external analysis may have benefitted the Association.

As Mintzberg (1994) writes: "Strategy making needs to function beyond the boxes, to encourage the informal learning that produces new perspectives and new combinations." (p. 109) Such strategies are often more easily identified by outsiders for whom the ubiquitous and systemic assumptions of the organization are visible (Schein, 1985) rather than a seamless part of the organization's culture.

Finding 16: The practice of contracting was not always consistent with the values and beliefs of the Association.

The need for a diversity of staff employment practices meant that the Association required ways to monitor the employment process to ensure that practices remained consistent with organizational values.

This is an area that neither external nor internal respondents mentioned often during the field study. Although it was seldom mentioned in interviews I believe, from other observations, that it was an area in need of examination, not only by the Association but by government and a wide range of private and public sector organizations. While the rationale for the use of contractors is transparent (an ability to accommodate short term projects or jobs without ongoing obligations to people and marked savings in the calculation and payment of employee wages and benefits) the principles which underlie contracting warrant consideration.

If an organization uses contracting as a way to reduce its staffing costs by circumventing established labour programs in the areas of pay and benefits (Employment Insurance, Workers' Compensation, maternity leave, et cetera), then I believe the organization must examine that decision from an ethical perspective. Dr. Newberry's strategic planning principles called for decisions to be "filtered" through the organization's values. These filters needed to be applied as robustly to a decision to contract employment as to any other ethical decision made by an organization committed to a strategic planning process. Only if contracting met the value filters of the organization should it have become an acceptable response to staffing needs. The debate should have occurred within the context of Hodgkinson's comments in The

Philosophy of Leadership (1983) and the Japanese models of organizational structure and social responsibility. While the changing social, economic, and political values of the 1990s have made contracting politically acceptable I believe that if an organization is to attain or maintain exemplary status then the question of contracting must be viewed first as an ethical question and secondly as an economic one. If organizations fail to recognize the ethical implications of contracting then there is a danger of straying from the foundational principles that are professed in the organizational mission and charter.

Reflections on Findings and Implications for Practice

The implications for practice are presented as a series of seven interrelated reflections. Each reflection is considered regarding its connection to the focus organization, the contemporary literature, contemporary third sector issues and my professional experiences in the area.

Reflection 1: Effective third sector organizations ensure that fundamental organizational values are demonstrated in the practices of employees through sustained personal commitment to the organization and its core values.

Writers (Bryson, 1995; Newberry, 1992; Schein, 1985; Vaill, 1984; Vaill, 1996) noted that highly effective organizations are staffed by people who have internalized the core values of the organization and are committed to them. The

importance of these observations are reiterated in the observation made by Vaill (1984) that: "There is no real escape from this problem, for how we define 'performance' and 'excellence' [since they] depend on values" (p. 85).

As Bartlett and Ghoshal (1994) write: "If people are to put out the extraordinary effort required to realize company targets, they must be able to identify with them. As one disaffected manager said, 'It's fine to emphasize what we must shoot for, but we also need to know what we stand for'" (p. 84). Bartlett and Ghoshal (1994) continue by observing: "In fact, the goal for most companies should be to build on the strengths and modify the limitations of the existing set of values, not to make radical changes in values. And where value confrontation is essential, it requires careful attention, not a broadside attack"(p. 85).

These observations are particularly important in times of rapid organizational change where strategic plans are often required to change with much greater rapidity than the core values of an organization.

Vaill (1984) identifies three characteristics of High Performing Systems (HPSs) that speak to the values issues:

1. There is a clear, common, strong, and congruent sense of purpose in the system's members.

2. Organizational members have an enduring commitment to organizational purposes and that commitment is highly focussed.

3. "Teamwork in HPSs is focused on the task. Social psychology's favorite distinction between 'task functions' and 'group maintenance functions' tends to

> dissolve. Members will have discovered those aspects of system operations which require integrated actions and will have developed behaviours and attitudes which fulfil these requirements. (p. 86)

The characteristics are identified in the case study presented in the research. The importance of these factors is most visible during times of conflict with internal or external constituents and organizational restructuring. During times of continuing organizational turbulence as frequently seen during the 1990s, or "whitewater" (Vaill, 1996), the ability to maintain organizational values is critical as was observed in the opening of the study:

> The ability and willingness of key groups to work together in harmony is viewed as critical in the establishment and maintenance of an effective third sector organization. This is a focus of this research study. (p. 21)

or as Morgan (1986), cited earlier, observed:

> Where corporate culture is strong and robust a distinctive ethos pervades the whole organization: employees exude the characteristics that define the mission or ethos of the whole. . . . (p. 139)

In summary the practice of core organizational values in the delivery of services is seen to be fundamental to the establishment and maintenance of an effective third sector organization.

Reflection 2: Effective third sector organizations ensure that appropriate organizational processes and practices are maintained in their decision making.

As Mintzberg & Westley (1992) write:

> In our experience. . . attempts to bypass both learning and vision, that is, importing outside learning without passing it through internal vision -- without

> internalizing the concept of the change in the mindset of members of the organization -- instead going straight to procedural planning, tends to be dysfunctional. (p. 45)

That view is one that is shared by Newberry (1992) in his filters of analysis when he writes that decisions must be identified by organizational purpose, corporate leadership values, organizational mission, and the preferred future or vision of the organization (p. 43).

As Vaill (1984) writes:

> The extent to which members can come to share pictures in their heads about the organization's basic purposes depends on some degree of stability in environmental demands, members' own expectations and needs, the technologies they are operating, and the structures through which they are bound together. Beyond some unknown threshold, too much change in this system of factors breaks down the shared sense of what the organization is, why it exists, and what its basic purposes are. (p. 90)

A similar view was expressed in the Tanton/Mitchell report, cited earlier, when they defined the ideal leadership candidate for the Association:

> [the candidate will] possess strong leadership skills, [have] experience in a senior management role in an educational focused organization and have the ability to:
>
> - lead the development by the Board of Directors and implementation of a strategic plan to achieve the mandate of the Association and to continually review and recommend refinements to the plan in light of changing circumstances. (p. 136)

Bryson (1995) expands on the concept by writing that:

> . . . most organizations typically will not be able to develop a detailed vision of success until they have gone through several iterations of strategic planning -- if they are able to develop a vision at all. . . . Strategic planning's interactive, flexible, action-oriented nature is precisely what makes it so attractive to public and nonprofit leaders and managers. (p.38)

Bryson (1995) continues by recognizing the limits of strategic planning for managers while noting that: "Attention to stakeholder concerns is crucial: *the key to success for public and non-profit organizations (and for communities) is the satisfaction of key stakeholders.*" (p. 237) This "key to success," however, has a built in difficulty for the effective leader of a third sector organization. For while the political realities of third sector governance demand the accountability through successful strategic planning the leader of the organization faces the difficulties outlined by Mintzberg (1994) when he writes:

> While certainly not dead, strategic planning has long since fallen from its pedestal. But even now, few people fully understand the reason: *strategic planning* is not *strategic thinking*. . . . And this confusion lies at the heart of the issue: the most successful strategies are visions, not plans. (p. 107)

Mintzberg's (1994) article warrants further consideration when he observes:

> For strategic planning, the grand fallacy is this: because analysis encompasses synthesis, strategic planning is strategy making. This fallacy itself rests on three fallacious assumptions: that prediction is possible, that strategists can be detached from the subjects of their strategies, and, above all, that the strategy-making process can be formalized. (p. 110)

Mintzberg continues by reference to Jelinek's Institutionalizing Innovation when she says that the attraction of strategic planning for the executive is similar to the attraction of Taylor's work-study methods which were " a way to circumvent human idiosyncrasies in order to systematize behavior" (p. 110). Mintzberg continues by observing that:

> All of this is dangerously fallacious. Innovation has never been institutionalized. Systems have never been able to reproduce the synthesis

> created by the genius entrepreneur or even the ordinary competent strategist, and they likely never will. (p. 110)

It is for these reasons that the best examples of exemplary service in the case study were often identified in examples of strategic thinking (pp. 170, 171, 178) rather than in the more formal processes of strategic planning (pp. 154, 155).

In summary for a third sector organization to be effective it must maintain those processes and practices which enable its leaders to think and act strategically in a rapidly changing environment while maintaining an appropriate understanding of the political needs of organizational governors for strategic planning.

Reflection 3: That third sector organizations ensure that the foundational values of the organization respect individual employee's rights while maintaining exemplary client service.

The need to balance organizational needs against the need to ensure respect for individual employees and their private lives was a focus for many staff members during the research period. One director observed: "I think the nature of the work is such that you don't get particularly good work out of people that are on the edge of a breakdown. . . "(p. 186) That sense was reiterated in *"Finding 1: Respect for individuals and fundamental organizational values was a cultural imperative for the BCSTA staff and trustees"* and in *"Finding 12: The BCSTA staff balanced the need to serve with excellence and the need to respect and protect the individuals offering service through a process of education and reflection."*

These observations are consistent with the comments by Bartlett and Ghoshal (1994) when they write:

> In the companies we studied that were best at achieving this new kind of relationship, top-level managers focused on three activities. They recognized employees' contributions and treated them like valuable assets. They committed to maximizing opportunities for personal growth and development. And they ensured that everyone not only understood how his or her role fit into the company's overall organizational purpose but also how he or she might contribute personally to achieving it. (p.86)

They continued by writing:

> Through actions such as these [see previous quotation], born of genuine respect and concern for individual employees, senior managers develop the basis for mutual commitment. They can then build on this foundation by demonstrating equal concern for the growth and development of all of the organization's members. (p. 87)

Bartlett and Ghoshal (1994) conclude by warning that if an organization fails to maintain the needed balance between organizational needs and personal needs of its employees "companies quickly lose the sense of identification and pride that makes them attractive not only to employees but also to customers and others" (p. 88). It is that ability to combine personal and organizational needs that is recognized by Vaill (1984) when he observes that HPSs are seen as organizations., or systems that have 'jelled,' even though the phenomenon is very difficult to talk about." He continues by observing that they are organizations have found a "fit" between the "various elements and practices of the system" (p. 88).

As a consultant I have witnessed numerous examples of the need for balance between organizational needs and the needs of individuals. This is especially evident

in my experience in small organizations (under 50 staff) or organizations that are undergoing major restructuring due to changing technologies or corporate reorganizations. During times of high organizational stress (times of uncertainty) there is often an enhanced level of expectation for employee performance which is simultaneously experienced by employees as a decrease in job security and an increased feeling of professional incompetence as a result of changing performance and task expectations. These factors are frequently most evident in third sector organizations as a result of the "microtime" (Vaill, 1996) nature of board members' commitment to the organization.

Reflection 4: Third sector organizations need to establish and maintain a regular process of review to ensure stakeholders (internal and external), legal requirements, and traditional relationships are appropriate to the changes being experienced in the internal and external environments of the organization.

The traditional responses to these needs have been found in S.W.O.T. processes within strategic planning. As Boschken (1994) writes:

> Much of our current understanding about agency performance hinges on a singular dedication *to "the client."* Probably influenced by the literature of "excellence" (Peters and Waterman, 1982), many have lost sight of the fact that a public organization has many different and frequently competing constituencies or stakeholders. (p. 308)

Because HPSs are particulary susceptible to a sense of being "different" and strongly bounded with an exclusive membership they are more vulnerable to this type of threat

than organizations operating in more open-systems (Vaill, 1984).

Finding 16 identified an area where the focus organization was less sensitive to this type of change because of its focus on "clients." This is not to discount the observations of Bryson (1995) when he writes:

> Attention to stakeholder concerns is crucial: *the key to success for public and non-profit organizations (and communities)* is the satisfaction of key stakeholders. (p. 27)

He continues by observing that strategy change cycles:

> should be clearly focused on satisfying key stakeholders in ways that are politically acceptable, technically workable, and legally, morally, and ethically defensible. (p. 45)

However, there is an increasing need to understand that "turbulence and instability are woven into the macrosystem; they are not just things that happen to it from the outside" (Vaill, 1996, p. 7). That understanding has substantial implications for third sector organizations since it "means that beyond all of the other skills, and attitudes that permanent white water requires, people have to be (or become) extremely effective learners" (Vaill, 1996, p. 20).

It is the ability to learn and adapt that has become critical for third sector organizations in the "white water" of the 1990s. If third sector organizations fail this test then the observations of Aldrich (1979) and Yutchman and Seashore (1967) will ultimately apply and they will fail the ultimate test of effectiveness, the ability to survive.

Reflection 5: Third sector organizations must recognize their financial vulnerability and seek appropriate responses to ameliorate the effects of their inherent weakness.

The understanding of financial vulnerability is ubiquitous within third sector organizations. None would quarrel with Aldrich's (1979) observation, cited earlier, that: "Survival is found in the organization's ability to acquire scarce resources by competing with other organizations in the environment." (p. 21) Findings 6 and 14 address this issue directly as it has impacted the BCSTA.

In my work with third sector organizations the question of stable funding is frequently one of the first issues identified by both administrative and governance members. Since third sector organizations, by definition (Nutt & Backoff, 1992), depend on non-mandated funding sources this concern for financial stability is understandable. The potential solutions, however, are becoming increasing elusive for many third sector organizations during the 1990s as government cutbacks, high unemployment, and the loss of donor confidence plague many previously secure third sector organizations. The Canadian Red Cross is an organization that has recently experienced a heightened awareness of this inherent third sector weakness.

Reflection 6: Third sector organizations must commit themselves to strategic internal and external scans to ensure an accurate and continuous reading of changing political, social, and economic circumstances.

As Bryson (1995) writes:

> Not only have the environments of public and nonprofit organizations and communities changed dramatically in the recent past, more upheaval is likely in the future. Those of us who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s came to think that continuous progress was the norm, that everything would always continue to get steadily better. How wrong we all were! The norm is not continuous progress, but periods of stability interrupted by significant change, uncertainty, and surprise. (pp. 19-20)

Vaill (1996) recognizes the impossibility of anticipating all of the changing circumstances likely to face a third sector organization when he writes:

> . . . it is important to understand that no number of anticipatory mechanisms can forestall the next surprising, novel wave in the permanent white water. There is no way the system can be protected against all eventualities without paralyzing it. (p. 13)

Given the new reality of the 1990s Vaill (1996) says organizational leaders may find themselves alone in their recognition of the changing circumstances. He writes:

> First of all, the turbulence of a part of a macrosystem is turbulence for a particular learner. It may not feel turbulent to others, and hence there may be no one else who appreciates what needs to be learned to cope with the situation. (p. 58)

That sense of "isolated turbulence" was certainly a contributory factor in the ability of the BCSTA to address the issue of non-member boards prior to and during the fieldwork of 1993-94. The whitewater that was being experienced by staff members was not shared equally among organizational governors and "client members" whose interests were substantially more focused on the macrosystem. It was not until the mandating of the compulsory Employers' Association that the whole organization was forced to respond to the turbulence created by the political, economic and social circumstances.

In my experiences with other third sector organizations it is not unusual for senior management to experience turbulence which is perceived as "whitewater" without the governance side of the organization being aware of the potential threat to the organization. Indeed management will often make conscious efforts to mask the turbulence from third sector governors especially if those governors have expressed a preference to "not be involved in the details" of the organization.

Bartunek and Moch (1987) argue against such an approach when they observe that the chances of an organization successfully managing the change are improved when they become aware of the three orders of change and explicitly target their responses and interventions to one of the change levels:

> 1. First-order change: the tacit reinforcement of present understandings.
> 2. Second-order change: the conscious modification of present schemata in a particular direction.
> 3. Third-order change: the training of organizational members to be aware of their present schemata and thereby more able to change these schemata as they see fit.(p. 486)

Reflection 7: Third sector administrative and governance leaders must ensure that both inspirational and relational leadership is provided on both a micro-time and macro-time basis.

As Vaill (1984) writes

> . . . one of the most common problems in strategic management is the length of view top managers take. It tends to be too short. Their term of office does not extend far enough into the future. They will not be around when the fruits (or poisons) of their decisions appear. This is why the concept of macro-time is so important. (p. 97)

Vaill (1984) in identifying the characteristics of leaders of HPSs names three key characteristics:

> 1. Leaders of high-performing systems put in extraordinary amounts of *time*.
> 2. Leaders of high-performing systems have very strong *feelings* about the attainment of the system's purposes.
> 3. Leaders of high-performing systems *focus* on key issues and variables. (pp. 93-94)

Vaill (1984) continues by observing that by understanding leaders' characteristics other organizational members come to better understand the system as a whole. He says:

> The scheme is also very useful for understanding members' behaviour and for understanding the system as a whole. With due regard for the different roles they play and scopes of responsibility they carry, Time-Feeling-Focus can be used for looking at anyone in the high-performing system. It is not just the leader but the system as a whole which can be seen functioning at all sorts of odd times and in odd places. Members come in on evenings and weekends. The culture of the system blends into the cultures of their families. (p. 101)

Mintzberg and Westley (1992) discuss the importance of visionary leadership to organizations. They write:

> *Visionary leadership* is an informal approach to change driven by a single leader, who is typically the chief executive officer . . . It generally begins with a new conception for the organization. . . . Its informality means especially that the leader tends to maintain close contact with the details of the operationalization of his or her vision. That way adaptation can take place *en route*, so that, while the vision itself may seem largely deliberate, the details of its 'implementation' can emerge. (p. 43)

Vaill (1984) writes that

> Organizational leadership is "strong and clear. It is unambivalent. There is no question of the need for initiative nor of its appropriate source although it may not always be the same person. . . . Leaders are experienced as reliable and predictable." (p. 87)

Bryson (1995) observes the special leadership opportunities that exist in times of organizational change or uncertainty:

> Leadership opportunities expand in times of difficulty, confusion, and crisis, when old approaches clearly are not working and people are searching for meaningful accounts of what has happened and what can be done about it (Boal and Bryson, 1987a; Kouzes and Posner; 1987; Schein, 1992). Turning dangers, threats, and crises into manageable challenges is an important task for visionary leaders (Dutton and Jackson, 1987; Jackson and Dutton, 1988; Dutton and Ashford, 1993). (p. 222)

Bryson (1995) continues by noting that:

> In revealing and explaining real conditions, leaders lay the groundwork for framing and reframing the issues facing the organization and the strategies for addressing them (Stone, 1988; Bolman and Deal, 1991; Morgan, 1993). (p. 223)

The importance of the leadership question for third sector organizations is evident in case study findings directly related to the issue:

> *Finding 10: The empowerment of staff allowed for multiple leaderships within the Association.*
> *Finding 11: The formal and informal leadership choices of the Association were an important part of the Association's success.*

In summary the purpose of the reflections on the findings and the implications for practice has been to revisit some of the earliest questions raised in the literature review, reflect on the case studied and the findings drawn from that study, offer some recent literature that speaks to issues identified by the field work and suggest ideas that may benefit others who face the challenges of leading third sector organizations in the difficult political, social and economic times of the late 1990s.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the contextually specific data that were gathered during the case study. It is my belief that readers need to be actively engaged in the development of their own conclusions since contextual differences between this case and others make the unexamined importation of findings, reflections, or conclusions inappropriate.

Based on the correlates of effectiveness, the organizational models identified, and the fieldwork I have concluded that the following characteristics were important in this study:

1. That organizational context was critical to the understanding of the Association.
2. That inspirational and relational leadership was fundamental to its effectiveness.
3. That a strong sense of organizational purpose was vital in sustaining organizational effectiveness.
4. That quality people who were confident of ongoing visible support were an important part of the Association's ability to deliver exemplary client services.
5. That the use of transparent decision making processes was essential for ongoing constituent support.

6. That effective internal and external scans were essential to ensure organizational effectiveness particularly in times of increasing economic, social and political turbulence.

7. That researchers must recognize and clearly define the limits of case studies since no matter how thorough the examination only parts of an organization may be revealed out of respect for the organization and its internal and external constituents.

In conclusion, it is my hope that this study will lead others to explore the opportunities of artifacts and spheres of influence so that we may learn more about the creation and maintenance of exemplary organizations, where as Carver (1990) observed: "Dreaming is not only permissible for leaders, it is obligatory" (p. 29).

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APPENDIX A

A BRIEF HISTORY OF B.C. GOVERNMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON THE BCSTA

This history is confined to the changes that occurred during the Armstrong and Newberry years as Executive Directors of the Association except to note the long tenure of the Social Credit government before Armstrong's appointment. While I recognize that this brief history will not fully explain the constraints facing the Association and its executive directors I believe it will serve to refresh the memories of those who are familiar with British Columbia politics and provide a bare framework for those readers who are puzzled by decisions that may appear unusual or unwise when isolated from the political environment that had a very substantial effect on the Association and the decisions of its leaders.

The history sketches the political and educational balances in the province during times of Association growth and restructuring. It does not serve to replace much more detailed discussions found elsewhere. Those readers interested in a more detailed understanding of the historical context for the case study are encouraged to seek out sources such as London (1985) and Garr (1985), Leslie (1991), Mitchell (1983), and Twigg (1986). Those histories will provide a fuller and richer contextual background for the events examined in the present case study.

In 1952 British Columbia elected its first Social Credit government under the leadership of W.A.C. Bennett. The values of the Bennett government were right wing,

fundamentalist, and popular. British Columbia was beginning to develop a higher profile in the Canadian federation at this time. These were years of rapid growth and government funded mega projects involving hydro electricity and long term contracts with American partners for the management of water resources, huge increases in the province's infrastructure with the development of the British Columbia ferry system, and massive road building programs throughout the province.

British Columbians were optimistic about themselves and the future of their province. For the next twenty years the Social Credit government ruled British Columbia. In 1972 Dave Barrett a charismatic social worker mounted an election campaign that was able to avoid the previously successful tactic employed by the Social Credit party of splitting of the left and centre vote. Barrett was able to unseat the right wing Social Credit government with his New Democratic Party. The New Democrats strong and visible ties to British Columbia labour (including the BCTF) were significant as teachers and blue collar workers banded together to defeat the Social Credit candidates in the majority of the provincial ridings.

During the Social Credit reign the BCTF leadership had developed a position that placed the Federation solidly in the labour and NDP camps although many teachers remained committed to other parties in their private lives.

With the defeat of the government the business agenda of the right wing Social Credit government was quickly replaced with a more free spending left wing agenda that supported labour, education, social programs, and health care. It was during this

time that Dr. Henry Armstrong assumed the role of Executive Director of the BCSTA.

Both inflation and wage settlements were in double digits. The inflationary economy, new government, and Dr. Armstrong's background in educational finance and teaching placed the Association in a strong position. Large increases in the Association's budget were consistent with districts' expectations. It was a time for rapid growth in Association services, staff, and budgets. Districts still had access, by requisition, to the local tax base and, therefore, were able to exercise their governance responsibilities in ways that reflected their local expectations.

In 1976 the New Democrats were defeated and the Social Credit party was returned to power under its new leader, Bill Bennett. Bill Bennett was the son of W.A.C. Bennett the original Social Credit premier in British Columbia. The rapid inflation and inflation plus collective agreements of labour were proving worrisome to both federal and provincial governments. A belief in the need for wage restraints and a reduction in inflation became a primary focus both federally and provincially. By 1982 Bill Bennett had introduced legislation imposing wage restraints on contract settlements. This was in keeping with the earlier federal "wage and price controls" imposed in the later half of the 1970s.

The restraints influenced the BCSTA and its growth. While controls were generally welcomed by trustees they also meant that if the Association was to continue to grow other sources of revenue had to be found. It was in that context that Dr. Armstrong began to explore entrepreneurial options open to the Association that might

ensure its ability to grow at a rate greater than inflation. The marketing of educational programs, the World Congress immediately prior to Expo '86, and EduServ all grew out of attempts to sustain the Association's growth. The attempt to establish the Association as a travel agent was largely driven by the need to reduce the costs of the extensive trustee and staff travel required by the huge geographical areas served by the Association.

Following Expo '86 the Social Credit government was returned to power in a fall election (Social Credit 47, NDP 22). The throne speech in March of 1987 began what was to be a sustained attack on organized labour in British Columbia. The speech announced labour legislation that would "restore the democratic rights of individuals in the workplace." (Canadian News Facts, 1987, p. 3593). By April a bill was introduced that would "abolish public-sector wage restraints and give teachers the right to strike. The legislation, that many believe was designed to break the powerful teachers' federation would "allow teachers to organize as a union, seek certification and bargain separate from the BCTF." (Canadian News Facts 1987, p. 3611). The legislation was viewed as hostile by the BCTF and the Federation president Elsie McMurphy labelled it "an effort to balkanize organized labour" (p. 3611). By June 250,000 BC workers has taken job action and organized a one day walkout to protest the provincial legislation that would allow more provincial government involvement in the collective bargaining process. In spite of the labour protests by June 23, 1987 the government passed the legislation establishing a powerful industrial relations

commissioner who would monitor all disputes and make recommendations to the minister of labour to end the dispute if the commissioner felt the disruption threatened the "health, safety or welfare of residents or if it affects the provincial economy" (p. 3652).

October of 1987 saw the government continue its cost cutting measures and in November Premier Vander Zalm announced that up to one third of the province's 35,000 civil servants could be affected by privatization.

March 1988 saw more warnings to labour in the throne speech. "The speech cautioned organized labour that because contracts for 55 per cent of the unionized workers in the province are being renewed this year, 'the eyes of the world's business and investment community will be upon us.' The government would be 'fair' but firm, serving the interests of all British Columbians rather than special interests" (Canada News Facts, 1988 p. 3779).

In June of 1988 the first of what were to become seven by-elections was held in the traditionally safe Social Credit seat of Boundary-Similkameen. The riding had been held by the Social Credit party for 22 years, including the years of the NDP government (1972-75). The government lost the by-election and according to reports "it was a shattering loss for Premier Vander Zalm's government. More trouble was on the horizon for the Social Credit government when on June 28th the Attorney General resigned from cabinet explaining that "he no longer had the confidence of Premier William Vander Zalm" (Canada News Facts, 1988 p. 3887).

The government, in spite of its by-election defeat and several scandals stayed the course and in September of that year announced a new master contract with the British Columbia Government Employees' Union after an eleven day strike. 1989 brought further by-election defeats for the government and a prediction of an election call in 1990.

1990 saw the provincial government tighten the restraints on local school boards as they announced legislation that would require school boards to hold a referendum if they needed more money than the province had allotted them under its provincially controlled educational finance system that had replaced local requisition. Envelope funding was firmly in place in British Columbia education.

On March 29, 1991 having suffered seven by-election defeats and with the premier under investigation for conflict of interest Vander Zalm announced his resignation as soon as the party could find a replacement. The Social Credit party was 15% points behind in the polls and were facing a compulsory fall election. On April 2, 1991 Premier Vander Zalm resigned over alleged conflicts of interest. Rita Johnston was elected interim leader and opened the legislature on May 7th.

October 17, 1991 saw a provincial election. The NDP won a majority government under the leadership of three time Vancouver mayor Mike Harcourt (NDP 51, SC 7. Lib. 17). Several trustees in urban areas had run on NDP tickets and felt confident in their abilities to positively influence the government to restore educational spending. Anita Hagan was named as deputy premier and education

minister in the Harcourt government.

By November 1992 the honeymoon was over and Finance Minister Glen Clark (who was to go on to become Premier and win re-election for the NDP in 1996) announced $83 million in spending cuts with the largest savings being anticipated in the area of grants to schools ($18 million). This was the economic climate that greeted Dr. Newberry as he began his term as Executive Director of the BCSTA.

In September of 1993 the premier announced a major cabinet shuffle and long time friend and supporter of the BCSTA, Anita Hagan was removed from the education portfolio and cabinet. She was replaced by Art Charbonneau a minister who had a difficult relationship with the Association. Some observers suggest that the genesis of the Employers' Association could be found in the earlier legislation that targeted the BCTF.

By April of 1994 after innumerable meetings, briefs, and lobbying efforts by non-member boards, the BCTF, and the BCSTA the provincial government moved to name a compulsory employers' association. The decision not to name the BCSTA as the mandatory employers' association was seen as disastrous for the Association's future by many trustees.